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THE
SPIRITUAL
COMBAT





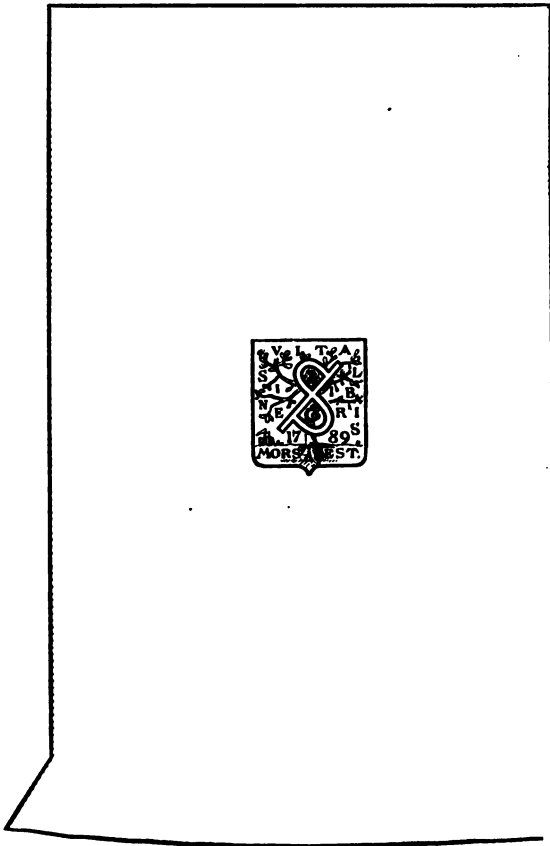


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SCUPOLI'S

SPIRITUAL COMBAT.



THE
SPIRITUAL COMBAT:

TOGETHER WITH

The Path of Paradise,

OR,

OF INWARD PEACE.



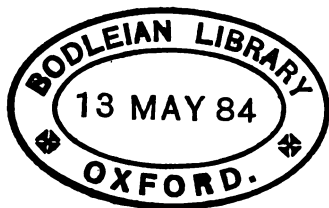
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INTRODUCTION.



THE earnestness of the religious revival in the south of Europe in the sixteenth century, which was commenced soon after the great schism in the Church, is well illustrated by this marvellous work of Lorenzo Scupoli, a Theatine Clerk Regular. This religious Order was founded, in 1524, by Caietan, or Gaetan, of Thienne (afterwards canonized) and Caraffa, bishop of Theate, whose diocese gave its name to the new congregation. Its great object was the same as that of the original followers of John Wesley; namely, to supply the deficiencies of the parochial clergy. No religious missionaries ever preached with greater power or made more converts—not in churches, but in public places, wherever large numbers could be got together. The *members of the new brotherhood were de-*

Introduction.

tered by no difficulties, and were fearless in all dangers: the outcast, dying of the most loathsome disease, received from them the last consolations of the Church. One of the foremost in zeal and devotion was Gian Pietro Caraffa, afterwards Pope Paul the Fourth, whose fervour was as conspicuous on the Papal throne as in founding the new order. It was from the convent of the Theatines, at Venice, that Ignatius Loyola set out for Rome to form the Society of Jesus.

All that is really known of the life of Scupoli, after his admission into the Theatine Order, is contained in the notice prefixed to the Italian. After many years of the active duties of his calling, during which he had won a great name as a preacher in most of the large towns in Italy, he retired into strict seclusion, in which he remained for twenty-five years, until his death. This withdrawal from active life, in consequence of some calumny, the nature of which has not come down to us, was destined to produce a work to have a world-wide influence. The fruit of this seclusion was *The Spiritual Combat*, which first appeared with the title, "By a Servant of God," and after-

Introduction.

wards as simply "By a Theatine," the author concealing his individuality, and wishing the work to appear as the teaching of the Order to which he belonged. This proceeding, so natural with such a disposition as that of the deviser of these practical rules for a holy and religious life, has given rise to a dispute almost as voluminous as that about the authorship of the *De Imitatione Christi*. *The Spiritual Combat* has been claimed both by the Benedictines and the Jesuits; but the testimony of St. Francis de Sales and other contemporaries clearly shows it to be the production of the Theatines, and the members of the latter order are unanimous in referring it to Scupoli as the sole author.

In the *Pilgrim's Progress* the Christian is represented as a traveller to the heavenly kingdom, beset by dangers and snares; in the *Spiritual Combat* he is shown throughout as a soldier putting on the armour of righteousness, and fighting with the great weapons of faith and endurance against all the powers of spiritual evil. The book is in fact a manual of exercises for the soldiers of Christ. Scupoli did not make his profession until about the

Introduction.

age of forty, and knew the temptations of the world from experience. It is not therefore surprising to find how practical and concise the rules are. Good examples of this will be found in the chapters on the "Exercise of the Will," "How to Combat Sloth," and in the advice how to resist sensual impulses. How useless it is as a safeguard to dwell on the vileness of vice, its insatiable craving, the bitterness and loathing, the peril and ruin of estate, life, and honour which follow in its train, the bitter experience of millions will testify. To fly to the Cross is the only sure way of safety.

In the present edition the original Italian has been followed, and it is hoped this admirable work is presented throughout in an acceptable form to the English reader.





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CHAPTER LII.



The Spiritual Combat.

CHAPTER I.

WHAT CHRISTIAN PERFECTION CONSISTS
IN WE MUST FIGHT IN ORDER TO ATTAIN IT
BY THE FOUR THINGS NECESSARY.

WHAT thou seek, beloved in Christ,
to attain the highest point of perfection
by approaching ever nearer and nearer
to God, to become one spirit with Him
the enterprise thou undertakest is the
most noble which can be imagined
and pressed; but thou hast first to learn what
constitutes the true and perfect Spiritual Life
many have made it to consist exclusively in
austerities, in wearing down the flesh, in hair
shirts and disciplines, in long vigils and fasts
and the like bodily sufferings and chastise-

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The Spiritual Combat.



CHAPTER I.

IN WHAT CHRISTIAN PERFECTION CONSISTS.
WE MUST FIGHT IN ORDER TO ATTAIN IT.
OF THE FOUR THINGS NECESSARY.

DOST thou seek, beloved in Christ, to attain the highest point of perfection, and by approaching ever nearer and nearer to thy God, to become one spirit with Him? The enterprise thou undertakest is the greatest and most noble which can be imagined or expressed; but thou hast first to learn what constitutes the true and perfect Spiritual Life.

Many have made it to consist exclusively in austerities, in wearing down the flesh, in hair shirts and disciplines, in long vigils and fasts, and the like bodily sufferings and chastisements.

Of Christian Perfection.

Some, especially women, think they have made great progress when they say many prayers, hear many long services, and frequent churches and communions.

Others again (among whom may be found not a few who wear the religious habit, and dwell in the cloister) are persuaded that perfection depends entirely on punctual attendance in the choir, on silence, solitude, and exact observance of rule.

And thus some hold perfection to consist in these, some in other actions of a like kind.

This, however, is by no means the truth ; for although the above-mentioned works are sometimes the means of obtaining increase of grace, and are sometimes the fruits thereof, yet it cannot be said that in these alone consists Christian perfection and the true life of the Spirit.

They are doubtless most effectual means of obtaining increase of the Spirit in the hands of those who use them well and discreetly, of acquiring new strength and vigour in the conflict with their own sinfulness and frailty ; to arm them against the assaults and snares of our common enemies ; and to furnish them with those spiritual aids so needful to all the *servants of God*, and more especially to those *who have but lately entered upon His service.*

Of Christian Perfection.

Again, they are the fruits of the Spirit only in spiritual persons, who chastise the body because it has offended its Creator ; and in order to keep it humble and submissive in His service ; who keep silence and live in solitude, that their conversation may be in heaven, and that they may avoid the slightest offence against their Lord ; who give themselves entirely to Divine worship and all offices of piety ; who pray and meditate upon the Life and Passion of our Lord, not for the sake of devotional feeling or curiosity, but that they may know more and more deeply their own sinfulness, and God's goodness and mercy ; may be inflamed more and more with the love of God, and the hatred of self ; following the Son of God by denying themselves, and taking up the cross ; who frequent the most holy Sacraments to the glory of His Divine Majesty, that they may be more closely united with God, and may gain fresh strength to resist their enemies.

To others, however, who build upon these alone, such outward works may sometimes (not from any fault in themselves, for they are very good, but from the mistaken use made of them) become a more certain occasion of ruin than open sins ; because, wrapt up in these *actions only*, such persons leave their hearts a

Of Christian Perfection.

prey to their own inclinations, and to the secret wiles of the devil. Satan, seeing them already out of the right path, not only suffers them to pursue these exercises with satisfaction, but lets their vain fancy roam up and down amid the delights of paradise, where they imagine that they are borne aloft even to the angelic choirs, and that they feel God within them. At times also these persons find themselves wholly taken up out of themselves, in high, mysterious, and empassioned meditations; so that, oblivious as it were of the world and all creatures, they deem themselves caught up into the third heaven.

But how far these men are from the perfection which we are seeking, and in how many and grievous errors they are entangled, may be easily gathered from their life and conversation.

For in all things, little as well as great, they desire to have the preference and advantage over others; they worship their own wisdom, and are self-opinionated; whilst, blind to their own faults, they observe busily and judge harshly the sayings and doings of others.

But touch them, however gently, on the vain estimation in which they hold themselves and delight to be held by others; bid them *lay aside any of their formal and regular*

Of Christian Perfection.

services, forthwith they are filled with indignation, and are beyond measure disconcerted.

And if God, in order to bring them to a true knowledge of themselves and of the way of perfection, visits them with trials or infirmities, or permits persecutions to overtake them (which are the touch-stones of His servants' loyalty, and never come upon them but by His command, and with His permission), then is discovered the insecure foundation on which their spiritual house rests, and the miserable condition of the interior laid bare. For they will not resign themselves to God's will, nor humble themselves under His hand, acquiescing in His ever-just though hidden judgments, in all circumstances which may befall them, joyful or sorrowful; neither will they, after the pattern of His only-begotten Son in His humiliation and suffering, abase themselves below all creatures, counting their persecutors as dear friends, as instruments of Divine mercy, working together for their mortification, perfection, and salvation.

Hence is it a thing most certain, that such persons stand in the greatest danger. For having their inward eye darkened and therewith contemplating self, and these their outward works, in themselves good, they attribute

Of Christian Perfection.

to themselves a high degree of perfection ; and thus becoming more and more puffed up, they judge others, while their own conversion (unless God vouchsafe to them a special need of grace) is well-nigh hopeless.

For this reason the open sinner may be more easily converted and brought back, than he who is veiled and hidden from himself by the semblance of virtue.

Thou seest, then, plainly enough, as I have now made plain to thee, that the essence of the Spiritual Life consisteth not in these things.

The Spiritual Life consists in nothing else than the knowledge of the Goodness and Greatness of God, and our own nothingness and proneness to all evil ; in the love of Him and hatred of ourselves ; in submitting ourselves, not to Him alone, but for love of Him to every creature ; in entirely renouncing our own will, and absolutely resigning ourselves to His Divine good pleasure ; and, moreover, doing and willing all these things, simply to glorify God, and solely to please Him, because such is His will, and because He deserves so to be loved and served.

This is the law of love, imprinted by the *hand of the Lord Himself* on the hearts of *His faithful servants*.

Of Christian Perfection.

This is the self-denial which He requires of us. This is His easy yoke and light burthen.

This is the obedience to which our Redeemer and Master calls us, both by His voice and example.

And because, in aspiring to such a height of perfection, thou must needs do continual violence to thyself, in order to fight manfully, and destroy thine own will in all things, little or great, therefore shouldest thou prepare thee for this conflict with all readiness, knowing that they only who fight bravely shall receive the crown.

Inasmuch then as this is of all conflicts the hardest (for whilst we are fighting against ourselves, we are striven against *by* ourselves), so shall the victory, when obtained, be of all others the most glorious, and the most dear in the sight of God.

For if thou canst succeed in trampling under foot and destroying all thine inordinate affections, desires, and wishes, even the slightest of them, thou wilt render a more acceptable service to God than if thou shouldest scourge thyself unto blood, or shouldest fast more rigorously than hermits and anchorites of old, or convert millions of souls, and yet willingly *suffer one rebel* will to remain unmortified.

Of Christian Perfection.

The conversion of souls is doubtless in itself more precious to the Lord than the mortification of a slight desire ; nevertheless, thy part is to will and to do that, first and chiefly, which the Lord specially wills and requires of thee.

And He will undoubtedly be better pleased that thou shouldst watch and strive to mortify thy passions, than if, knowingly and wilfully, leaving even one alive within thee, thou shouldst zealously serve Him in some other direction, though of greater dignity and importance.

Now that thou seest wherein real Christian perfection consists, and that in order to obtain it thou hast to undertake a constant and unrelenting warfare against thyself, thou must provide thee with four things as most sure and necessary weapons, by which to win the palm, and finally secure the victory in this spiritual combat. These are—

Distrust of self.
Trust in God.
Spiritual Exercises, and
Prayer.

Of all which we shall, with God's help, treat briefly and plainly.



Distrust of Self.

CHAPTER II.

OF DISTRUST OF SELF.

IN this conflict, so necessary to thee is distrust of self, that unless thou be furnished with it thou wilt assuredly be unable not only to gain the victory, but even to overcome the very weakest of thy passions.

And let this be well impressed on thy mind, inasmuch as our corrupt nature too easily disposes us to a false estimate of ourselves; so that while we are in reality absolutely nothing, we flatter ourselves that we are something, and, without the slightest foundation, presume vainly on our own strength.

This is a defect not easily discerned by ourselves, but one which is very displeasing in the sight of God. For He loves and desires us to acknowledge truly and heartily this most certain truth, that all grace and virtue in us is derived from Him alone, the source of all good, and that from ourselves can proceed nothing, no not even a good thought, which may be worthy of His approval.

And although this very distrust of self, which is *most necessary*, is itself the work of His

Distrust of Self.

Divine hand, Who is wont to bestow it upon His beloved, sometimes by means of holy inspiration, or again by sharp chastisements, by violent and almost irresistible temptations, or by other ways, incomprehensible to us, yet is it His will that we, on our part, should do our part. I will therefore lay before thee four means by which, relying above all things on the aid of the grace of God, such distrust of self may be acquired.

The first is, to meditate on and know thine own vileness and nothingness, how of thyself thou canst do no good thing, whereby to merit an entrance into the kingdom of heaven.

The second is, to implore the Lord for it, with fervent and humble prayer; for it is His gift. And in order to attain it thou must first regard thyself as not only wholly destitute of it, but as utterly powerless of thyself to gain it. Therefore present thyself again and again before the Divine Majesty with an assured faith that He is willing of His great goodness to grant thy petition; endure the delay, however long, which His providence appoints; and without any doubt thou shalt obtain it.

The third is, to live in continual fear of thyself, of thine own judgment, thy strong *inclination* to sin, the numberless enemies *against whom* thou art of thyself utterly power-

Distrust of Self.

less; their long practice in war, their wiles, their transformation into angels of light, and the innumerable arts and snares wherewith, in the very way itself of godliness, they secretly endeavour to entangle us.

The fourth, whenever thou art overtaken by any fall, to look more into thyself, and to consider more deeply thine own utter feebleness. For to this end did God permit thy fall, that, warned by a clearer light of inspiration than before, and by a truer knowledge of self, thou mightest learn to despise thyself as a thing most vile, and be willing to be so regarded by others. For without this willingness there can be no godly distrust of self, which is founded on genuine humility, and on the experimental self-knowledge of which we have been speaking.

This self-knowledge is indeed clearly necessary to all who seek after an union with the Supreme Light and Uncreated Truth, and Divine mercy frequently makes use of the falls of proud and presumptuous men to lead them to this knowledge; justly suffering them to run into some fault which they trusted to their own strength to avoid, that so, gaining a knowledge of themselves, they may learn to distrust self in every respect.

But the Lord is not wont to employ so sad a *method* until those more gracious means, of

Of Trust in God.

which we have before spoken, have been tried, and have failed to work the good which His Divine Mercy had in view.

He permits a man to fall more or less deeply, in proportion to his pride and self-esteem, so that whenever there should be no presumption, there also would be no fall.

Therefore, whensoever thou dost fall, at once betake thee humbly to know thyself as thou art, and with earnest prayer entreat the Lord to give thee light truly to know thyself, and entirely distrust thyself, lest thou fall again, it may be, into a deeper sin.



CHAPTER III.

OF TRUST IN GOD.

DISTRUST of self, necessary as it is, and as we have described it to be in this combat, is not alone sufficient. Unless we would be put to flight, or remain overcome in the hands of our enemies, we must add to it perfect trust in God, hoping and expecting from Him alone all aid, victory, and good whatsoever.

Of Trust in God.

For inasmuch as we, who are nothing, can look to ourselves for nothing but faults, and therefore should entirely distrust ourselves; but with the help of our Lord may we assuredly expect complete victory at all times. Therefore, in order to obtain His aid, let us arm our hearts with a lively confidence in Him.

And this also may be accomplished by four means.

1st. By beseeching God to grant it to us.

2nd. By gazing intently with the eye of faith at the Infinite Wisdom and Omnipotence of God, with Whom nothing is impossible or difficult, and by considering that His goodness is unbounded, and His willingness to give, hour by hour, and moment by moment, all things needful for the spiritual life and for complete mastery over self, if we will throw ourselves with trustfulness into His arms.

Our Divine Shepherd followed after His lost sheep for three and thirty years, with cries so piercing that His voice grew weak, and in a way so rough and thorny that He spilt His heart's blood, and left His life there. When the poor sheep now follows Him, through obedience to His commands, or through a desire (though at times but faint) to obey Him, calling upon Him and entreating Him earnestly

Of Trust in God.

for help, is it possible that He should now refuse to turn upon it His life-giving glance? Will He not give ear to it, and lay it upon His Divine shoulders, rejoicing over it with all His friends, and with the Angels of Heaven?

For if our Lord ceased not to search most diligently and lovingly for the blind and dumb sinner, the lost coin of the Gospel, till He found it, how is it possible that He should abandon him who, as a lost sheep, cries and calls piteously after his Shepherd?

And if God knocks continually at the heart of man, desiring to enter in and sup there, and to communicate to him His gifts, who can believe that when the heart opens and invites Him to enter, He will really turn a deaf ear, and refuse to come in?

3rd. The third way of acquiring this holy confidence is to call to mind that truth so plainly taught us in many passages of Holy Scripture, that none who have trusted in God have ever been brought to confusion.

4th. The fourth, which will serve at once for the attainment of distrust in self, and of trust in God, is this: When any thing occurs to thee to be done—any struggle with self to be undertaken, any victory over self to be attempted—before thou resolve upon it first

Of Trust in God.

think upon thine own weakness ; then, filled with distrust of self, turn to the wisdom, the power, and the goodness of God, and in reliance upon these commence to labour and fight manfully. Then with these arms in thine hands, and with prayer (of which we shall speak in its place), go forth to action and to battle.

Unless thou observe this order, though thou seem to thyself to be acting in reliance upon God, thou wilt too often find thyself mistaken ; for so common to man is a presumptuous reliance on self, and withal so subtle, that it lurks almost always even under our imagined distrust of self, and the trust we fancy we have in God.

That thou mayest, as much as possible, escape presumption, and that all thy works may be wrought in distrust of self, and trust in God ; thou must first consider thine own weakness, and next the omnipotence of God ; and both these should precede all thine undertakings.



Test of Self-Mistrust

CHAPTER IV.

HOW WE MAY KNOW WHETHER WE ARE ACTING
IN DISTRUST OF SELF, AND TRUST IN GOD.

THE presumptuous servant often imagines that he has attained to distrust of self, and trust in God, when it is really not so.

And how far this applies to thee thou mayest learn by the effect which a fall produces on thy mind.

If then, when thou fallest, thou art so saddened and despondent as to despair of advancing and doing well, this is a sure sign that thou trustest in thyself and not in God.

And this sadness and despondency will be the greater, in proportion as thou hast trusted to thyself and distrusted God. For he who has any large measure of mistrust of self, and trust in God, feels neither surprise, nor despondency, nor bitterness when he falls, knowing that this has been brought upon him by his own weakness and the little trust he has placed in God. On the contrary, more mistrustful of self, more humbly trustful in God, he pursues his enterprise, and follows after his enemies to the death, with renewed energy and resolution,

hating, above all things, his fault, and the rebellious passions which have occasioned his fall; and mourning, with a deep and meek sorrow, over his offence against God.

I would that these things were well considered by certain persons who think themselves spiritual, who, when they have fallen into any fault, cannot or will not be at rest for a moment. They hurry to their spiritual adviser rather to free themselves from the anxiety and uneasiness which spring from wounded self-love, than to cleanse themselves from the stain of sin by means of the most holy Sacrament, which should be their chief reason for resorting to him.



CHAPTER V.

OF THE ERROR OF MANY, WHO MISTAKE
TIMIDITY FOR GODLINESS.

TH**ERE** are many persons who fall into this error. They mistake the uneasiness and fear which follow upon sin for virtuous feelings; and do not see that these feelings, painful as they are, spring from wounded pride and presumption, based on self-confidence.

Further Ad to Self-Distrust

Thinking themselves to be something, they have unduly relied upon their own strength. Their fall obliges them to make the discovery of the vanity of such reliance, and then they are troubled and astonished as at some strange thing, and are disheartened to see the support on which they had rashly placed their confidence, give way.

This never happens to the humble man, who, confiding in his God alone, places no reliance upon himself. Though truly grieved when he falls into any fault, he is neither surprised nor disquieted; for he knows that, as is already clearly manifest to him by the light of truth, his fall is the result of his own misery and weakness.



CHAPTER VI.

FURTHER ADVICE AS TO THE ATTAINMENT
OF THIS DISTRUST OF SELF, AND TRUST
IN GOD.

INASMUCH as our whole power to subdue our enemies arises chiefly from distrust of self and trust in God, I will furnish thee with some further advice, that thou mayest (by Divine assistance) attain this grace.

and Trust in God.

Know then, and hold for certain that not all talents, natural or acquired, nor all graces freely bestowed, nor the knowledge of all Scripture, nor long habitual exercise in God's service, will enable us to do His will ; unless in every good and acceptable work to be performed, in every temptation to be overcome, in every danger to be avoided, in every cross to be borne according to His will, our heart be sustained and uplifted by His especial aid, and His hand be stretched out to help us.

We must then bear this in mind throughout our whole life, every day, every hour, every moment, that we may never allow so much as a thought of confidence in ourselves.

But as to trust in God, consider that it is as easy to Him to conquer many enemies as few, and the old and expert as easily as the weak and unskilful.

Therefore we will suppose a soul to be heavy laden with sins ; to have every possible fault and every imaginable failing ; and to have tried every possible means and resorted to every godly exercise, in order to forsake sin and to acquire virtues. We will suppose her to have done all this, and yet to have failed in making the least progress ; nay, on the contrary, to have been borne more than ever towards evil. Nevertheless she must not on

Of Spiritual Exercise.

this account lose her trust in God, nor lay aside her spiritual weapons and exercises, but still fight resolutely on, knowing that in this spiritual combat none is overcome, but he who ceases to struggle and to trust in God. His aid never fails His soldiers, though He sometimes permits them to be wounded. Fight on then boldly, for all depends on this. For there is a ready and effectual remedy to heal the wounds of all combatants, who look to God and to His aid with confidence; and when they least expect it, they shall see their enemies dead at their feet.



CHAPTER VII.

OF SPIRITUAL EXERCISE, AND FIRST OF THE UNDERSTANDING, WHICH MUST BE PRESERVED FROM IGNORANCE AND CURIOSITY.

IF mistrust of self, and trust in God, necessary as they are in this combat, be our only weapons, we shall not only fail to gain the victory over ourselves, but fall headlong into many evils. To these we must therefore add spiritual exercise, the third weapon previously mentioned.

This exercise relates chiefly to the understanding and to the will.

Of Spiritual Exercise.

As to the understanding, we must be on our guard against two faults, which are apt to impair it.

The first is ignorance, which darkens and obstructs the knowledge of truth, the proper object of the understanding. Therefore must it be made clear and bright by exercise, that so it may be able to see and discern plainly all that is needful for purifying the soul from unruly passions, and for adorning it with holy virtues.

This light may be obtained in two ways. The first and chiefest is prayer, entreating the Holy Spirit to pour it into our hearts. This He will not fail to do, if we in truth seek God alone, and the fulfilment of His holy will; and if in all things we submit our own judgment to that of our spiritual adviser.

The other is, to gain the habit of considering all things seriously and faithfully; to see whether they be good or evil, according to the teaching of the Holy Spirit, and not according to their outward appearance, as our senses or as the world would judge them.

This consideration, if rightly exercised, will teach us to regard as vanity and delusion, all which the blind and corrupt world loves, desires, and seeks after in so many and such various ways. It will show us plainly that *the honours and pleasures of earth are but*

Of a True Discernment.

vanity and vexation of spirit ; that injury and infamy inflicted on us by the world bring true glory, and that tribulation is a source of contentment. We shall learn that to pardon our enemies and to do them good is true greatness of soul, and one of the acts which most likens us to God ; that to despise the world is better than to be its master ; that to obey for the love of God, even those far beneath us, is an act more great and noble than authority over mighty princes ; that lowly self-knowledge is more precious than the highest intellectual attainments ; and that to mortify and conquer our own appetites, in however trifling instances, is more glorious than to storm strong cities, to defeat mighty armies, work miracles, or raise the dead.



CHAPTER VIII.

OF HINDRANCES TO A TRUE DISCERNMENT
OF THINGS, AND OF THE METHOD WHICH
WE MUST ADOPT TO JUDGE THEM ARIGHT.

OUR failure in discerning all the things above-mentioned, and many others also, is due to the precipitancy with which we conceive a hatred or a love of them on their first

Of a True Discernment.

appearance. By this means our understanding is darkened, so that it cannot judge of them dispassionately.

Lest thou fall into this delusion, be well advised, as far as possible, to keep thy will pure and free from inordinate affection for any thing whatsoever.

When any object then is presented to thee, view it with thine understanding, and give it mature consideration before thou be moved by hatred to reject it, if it be a thing contrary to thine inclinations, or before thou art inspired with a love for it, if it be a thing agreeable to thy taste.

For then the understanding, being unclouded by passion, will be free and clear, and able to perceive the truth, and to discover the evil which lurks behind a fair appearance, and the good which is veiled under the semblance of evil.

But if the will be first bent to love or to hate anything, the understanding cannot afterwards exercise a sound judgment upon it. For this prejudice, which will thus have obtruded itself, so darkens the understanding, that it sees the object as other than it is ; and so reflecting it on the will, influences it in spite of every rule and law of reason, to love or hate it with a greater intensity than before.

Of a True Discernment.

Hence, unless the rule here laid down be observed (which is of the utmost importance in the exercise of which we have been speaking), these two faculties, the understanding and the will, noble and excellent as they are, will soon act and react on each other in a vicious circle, leading from darkness into thicker darkness, and from error into deeper error.

Guard thyself most watchfully then from all unruly affection for anything whatsoever, the true character whereof thou shalt not have first examined and tested by the light of the understanding, and by the light of grace and of prayer, or, if needful, by the guidance of some trustworthy adviser.

And this I would urge thee to observe the more carefully, with regard to any outward works which are good and holy, because in these, as such, more than in other acts, there is the greatest danger, on our part, of deception and indiscretion, since they are so good in themselves.

Hence thou mayest take no little hurt from some circumstances of time, or place, or degree, or respect for obedience; as is known to many who have incurred great danger in the practice of exercises, in themselves commendable and most holy.

CHAPTER IX.

OF ANOTHER THING FROM WHICH THE UNDERSTANDING MUST BE PRESERVED, SO THAT IT MAY JUDGE THINGS RIGHTLY.

THE second danger from which we must guard our understanding is curiosity; because, by filling it with hurtful, vain, and frivolous thoughts, we disable it from laying hold of that which most nearly concerns the true mortification of ourselves and our perfection.

To this end thou must be as one dead to all earthly things, which do not concern thee, although they may be harmless in themselves.

Ever restrain thine intellect as much as possible, and love to keep it lowly.

Let the news and the changes of the world, great and small, be to thee as though they were not; and should they come in thy way, reject them, and drive them far from thee.

Be sober and humble, even in thy desire to understand heavenly things, wishing to know nothing but Christ crucified, His Life, and His Death, and whatsoever He requires of thee.

Cast all other things far from thee, and thus shalt thou be very pleasing unto God. For

The Exercise of the Will.

CHAPTER X.

OF THE EXERCISE OF THE WILL, AND OF THE
END TO WHICH ALL ACTIONS, WHETHER
OUTWARD OR INWARD, SHOULD BE
DIRECTED.

BESIDES this needful exercise of the understanding, thou must so discipline thy will, that it be not left to follow its own desires, but be in all things conformed to the Divine pleasure.

And remember, that it is not enough only to strive after those things which are most pleasing to God ; but, yet further, thou must so will and so do them, as being moved thereto by Him, and with a view to please Him alone.

In this exercise of the will, even more than in that of the understanding, we shall find the struggle with our nature, which seeks itself and its own ease and pleasure in all things ; but most of all in those of a holy and spiritual nature. With these nature delights itself, feeding on them with eagerness, as suspecting not such food.

. As soon as they are presented to us we gaze

The Exercise of the Will.

longingly upon them, and crave for them ; not because such is the will of God, nor with the sole view of pleasing Him, but for the sake of the benefit and satisfaction we ourselves experience from willing those things which God wills.

We are the more liable to err, as the thing desired is, in itself, the more excellent. Hence, even in the desire after God Himself, we are exposed to the snares of self-love, which often leads us to look to our own interests, and to the benefits we expect from God, rather than to His will, whose pleasure it is, that we love, and desire, and obey Him, for His own glory's sake alone.

I will now show thee a way to avoid this delusion, which would hinder thee in the path of perfection ; and how to accustom thyself to will and do all things as guided by the Spirit of God ; and with the pure intention of honouring and serving Him alone, who should be the sole beginning and end of our every thought and action. When any thing is presented to thee as willed by God, do not allow thyself to will it, till thou have first raised thy thoughts to Him, to discover whether He wishes thee to will it, and because He so wills it, and to please Him alone.

Then let thy will, thus moved and drawn by

The Exercise of the Will.

His, be then bent upon willing it, because He wills it, and with the sole view of pleasing and honouring Him.

Then in like manner, if thou wouldest refuse things which are contrary to God's will, refuse them not till thou shalt first have fixed the eye of the understanding upon His Divine Will, which wills thee to refuse them solely for the sake of pleasing Him.

But thou must know that the deceits of our wily nature are but little suspected ; for, ever secretly seeking herself, she often leads us to fancy that our end and motive is to please God when it is far otherwise.

Thus it often happens that when we will or will not anything for our own interest, we imagine that we are choosing or not choosing it, in the hope of pleasing, or in the fear of displeasing God.

The true and effectual remedy for this delusion is purity of heart, which consists in that which is, indeed, the aim and object of all this spiritual combat—the putting off the old man and putting on the new.

And to this end, seeing thou art full of self, beware in the beginning of every action, and free thyself as much as possible from all admixture of any selfish desires. Will nothing, *do nothing*, refuse nothing, unless thou feel

The Exercise of the Will.

thyself moved and drawn thereto by the pure and simple will of God.

If thou canst not always feel this, especially in the inward working of the mind, and in outward actions of short duration, thou must be content to have this motive ever present with thee in the heart, from the habit of maintaining a pure intention of pleasing thy God alone in all things.

But in actions which last longer, it is well not to be content with stirring up within thyself this motive at the beginning, but also to be careful to renew it frequently and to keep it alive to the end. Otherwise thou wilt be in danger of falling into another snare, springing also from our natural self-love, which, always more inclined and yielding to self than to God, often causes us, after a time, to change unconsciously our objects and our aims.

The servant of God, who is not alive to this danger, often begins a work with the single thought of pleasing his Lord alone, but soon, by degrees, and almost imperceptibly, he begins to take such pleasure in his work, that he loses sight of the Divine Will, and follows his own. He dwells so much on the satisfaction he feels in what he is doing, and on the benefit and credit arising from it, that if God Himself place some hindrance in his way,

The Exercise of the Will.

either by sickness or accident, or someone's interference, he is instantly troubled and disquieted, and often falls to murmuring against the hindrance, whatever it be; nay, sometimes even against God Himself. A clear proof that his intention was not wholly of God, but sprang from an evil root and a corrupt motive.

For he who acts only as moved by God, and with a view to please Him alone, desires not one thing above another. He wishes to have that only which it pleases God that he should have, and at the time and in the way which He may appoint; and whether he have it or not, he is equally contented, because in either case he obtains his wish and fulfils his intention, which was no other than God's good pleasure.

Therefore recollect thyself seriously, and take care always to direct every action to this perfect end.

And even if the bent of thy natural disposition move thee to do good from fear of the pains of hell, or hope of the joys of paradise, thou mayest even with these motives propose to thyself as thine end the will and pleasure of God, who desires not that thou shouldst enter into hell, but into His kingdom.

It is not in man fully to understand the force and virtue of this motive; for a single action,

The Exercise of the Will.

however mean or insignificant, done with a view to please God alone and for His glory, is far more precious (if we may so say) than many others of the greatest value and importance, but springing from motives short of this.

Hence a single penny given to a poor man, with the sole desire to please His Divine Majesty, is more acceptable to God than the entire renouncing of all one's worldly goods for any other end, even for the attainment of the blessedness of heaven, an end not only good, but desirable in the highest degree.

This practice of doing all things with the single aim of pleasing God alone, seems hard at first, but will become plain and easy by practice, if with the warmest affections of the heart we desire God alone, and long for Him as our only and highest Good, who deserves that all creatures should seek Him for Himself, and serve Him and love Him above all things.

The deeper and the more constant are our meditations upon His infinite excellence, the more fervent and the more frequent will be these exercises of the will ; and we shall thus gain more easily and more speedily the habit of performing every action from love to that *gracious Lord, Who alone is worthy of it.*

Seeking God's Pleasure.

Lastly, in order to the attainment of this Divine motive, I advise thee to seek it of God by unceasing prayer, and to meditate frequently upon the innumerable benefits which He, out of His pure and disinterested love, has bestowed and is still bestowing upon us.



CHAPTER XI.

OF SOME CONSIDERATIONS WHICH MAY INCLINE THE WILL TO SEEK THE GOOD PLEASURE OF GOD IN ALL THINGS.

MOREOVER, to incline the will with the greater readiness, to seek in all things the glory of God and His pleasure, call to mind in how many and various ways He hath first loved and honoured thee.

In creation, by making thee out of nothing, after His likeness, and making all other creatures for thy use.

In redemption, by sending, not an angel, but His only-begotten Son to redeem thee, not with the corruptible price of silver and gold, but with His own precious blood, and by His *most painful* and ignominious death. Remem-

Seeking God's Pleasure.

ber too that every hour—nay, every moment—He defends thee from thine enemies, fights for thee by His grace, offers thee continually in the Sacrament of the altar His well-beloved Son, to be thy spiritual food and strength. Is not this a token of the inestimable regard and love borne to thee by the infinite God? It is not in man to conceive, on the one hand, the value which so great a Lord sets upon us poor creatures in our lowliness and misery; and, on the other, how great the return we are bound to make to His supreme Majesty, who has done so many and so great things for us!

For if earthly lords, when honoured even by poor and lowly men, feel bound to honour them in return, how should our vile nature demean itself towards the Sovereign Lord of all things, by whom we are so dearly loved and so highly prized?

And besides all this, and before all things, keep ever vividly in mind that the Divine Majesty is infinitely worthy to be honoured, and to be served purely for Himself alone and for His own good pleasure.



The Variety of Wills.

CHAPTER XII.

OF THE DIVERS WILLS THAT ARE IN MAN,
AND OF THE WARFARE BETWEEN THEM.

ALTHOUGH we may be said, in this combat, to have within us two wills—the one of the mind, which is thence called the reasonable and higher; the other of the senses, thence called the sensual and lower, and commonly described by the words “appetite,” “flesh,” “sense,” and “passion;” yet as it is through the mind that we are men, we cannot truly be said to will anything which is willed by the senses, unless the higher will be also disposed thereto.

And herein lies our whole spiritual conflict. The reasonable will being placed, as it were, midway between the Divine Will, which is above it, and the inferior will or the will of the senses, which is below it, is continually warring against both, each seeking in turn to draw it and subdue it and bring it into subjection.

Much hard toil and trouble must, however, be undergone, especially at the outset, by beginners, when they resolve to amend their

The Conflict of the Wills.

sinful lives, and, renouncing the world and the flesh, give themselves up to the love and service of Jesus Christ.

For the opposition which their superior will meets with, from the continual warfare that goes on between the Divine and sensual will, is so sharp and violent that it is accompanied by much suffering.

It is not so with those who are experienced in the way of virtue or of vice; they pursue without difficulty the path on which they have entered, the virtuous yielding readily to the Divine Will, and the vicious yielding without resistance to the will of the senses.

But let none think it possible to perfect himself in the true Christian graces, or to serve God as He should be served, unless he be willing in good earnest to do violence to himself, and to endure the pain of parting with all pleasant things whatsoever, whether great or small, to which his earthly affections had clung.

Hence it is that so few reach perfection; for after having with much toil overcome their greater faults, they will not persevere in doing violence to themselves, by enduring the weariness caused by the continual pricking of countless lesser fancies and desires. They grow weary of so unremitting a struggle; they suffer *these insignificant enemies to have their own*

The Conflict of the Will.

way, and so to acquire an absolute mastery over their hearts.

Of this class are men who, if they do not take what belongs to others, cling with an inordinate affection to that which is lawfully their own. If they do not obtain honours by unlawful means, yet they do not, as they ought, shun them; but, on the contrary, covet them, and even at times seek to gain them in divers ways. If they observe fasts of obligation, yet they do not mortify their palate as to superfluities, or the indulgence of delicacies. If they live continently, yet they do not renounce many indulgences which much hinder union with God, and the growth of the spiritual life; and which, as they are very perilous to all persons, even the holiest, and most perilous to those who least fear them, should be avoided by all as much as possible.

Hence it follows that all other good works are performed in a lukewarm spirit, and accompanied by much self-seeking and many lurking imperfections, and by a certain self-esteem and desire to be duly valued and praised by the world.

Such persons not only fail to make any progress in the way of salvation, but rather, by turning back, are in danger of relapsing into their former sins, because they have no

The Conflict of the Will.

love of true holiness, and show little gratitude to their Lord, Who rescued them from the devil's bondage; they are, moreover, too blind and ignorant to see the peril in which they stand, while they falsely persuade themselves of the security of their condition.

And here we discover a delusion, so much the more hurtful as it is the less guarded against, in that many who aspire to the spiritual life, being (though in truth they know it not) greater lovers of themselves than of what is really right, select for the most part those exercises which suit their taste, and neglect others which touch to the quick their natural inclinations and their sensual appetites, against which they should in all reason put forth their full strength.

Therefore I advise and exhort thee to be in love with what is painful and difficult, for such things will bring with them the end and object of the whole struggle—victory over self. The surer and speedier shall be this victory, the more deeply thou wilt be in love with the toils which in virtue and war are the lot of beginners; and if thou lovest the difficulty and toilsome struggle, rather than the victory and the virtue to be attained, thou shalt the more speedily obtain all that thou desirest.

How to Subdue

CHAPTER XIII.

OF THE WAY TO RESIST SENSUAL IMPULSES,
AND OF THE ACTS TO BE PERFORMED BY
THE WILL IN ORDER TO ACQUIRE HABITS
OF VIRTUE.

WHENEVER thy reasonable will is attracted by the will of sense on the one hand, and by the Divine Will on the other, each contending for the mastery, thou must exercise thyself in various ways in order that the Divine Will may in all things prevail with thee.

First. Whenever thou art assailed and buffeted by the impulses of the natural man, thou must make a brave resistance, so that the superior will consent not to them.

Secondly. When the assaults have ceased, excite them anew, in order to repress them with greater force and vigour.

Then challenge them again a third time, whereby thou shalt accustom thyself to repel them with scorn and abhorrence.

These two challenges to battle should be made to every unruly appetite, except in the

Sensual Impulses.

case of temptations of the flesh, of which we will speak in their place.

Lastly. Thou shouldest make acts contrary to each evil passion to be resisted.

This will be made more clear to thee by the following example.

Thou art perhaps assailed by feelings of impatience. Look carefully into thyself, and thou wilt find by these feelings that the superior will is constantly attacked in order to win its consent.

Now, then, betake thee to the first exercise, use the higher will repeatedly, do all in thy power to stifle each feeling as it arises, that thy will consent not thereunto.

And never desist from this conflict till thou see thine enemy, wearied unto death, yield himself discomfited.

But behold here, beloved, the malice of the devil. When he perceives that we resist stoutly the first stirrings of any passion, not only does he refrain from exciting them in us, but when excited he seeks for the time to allay them, lest by the practice of resisting the passion we should acquire the habit of the opposite virtue. He would also fain betray us into the snares of pride and vain-glory, by dexterously insinuating to us that, like valiant soldiers, we have destroyed our enemies at one blow.

How to Subdue

Pass on, therefore, to the second course, by recalling to memory, and exciting in thy mind those thoughts which tempted thee to impatience, till thou again experience the feeling; then with a stronger will, and more constant endeavour, set thyself to repress every such feeling.

And because, however much we have resisted our enemies, from a sense of duty and a desire to please God, we are still, unless we thoroughly hate them, in danger of being one day overcome by them; thou must therefore assault them a third time, and drive them from thee, with feelings, not of dislike only, but of contempt, until they become hateful and detestable objects in thine eyes.

Lastly, for the adorning and perfecting thy soul in the habit of virtue, thou must exercise thyself in inward acts directly opposed to thine unruly passions.

Thus, if thou wouldest attain to the state of perfect patience, when thou meetest with an insult which gives cause for impatience, it will not suffice to exercise thyself in the ordinary modes of conflict which I have described; thou must do more; thou must willingly endure and love the indignity thou hast received, desiring a repetition of it, and from the *person*, and in the same manner, and

Sensual Impulses.

ing thyself to bear still heavier

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How to Subdue

our heart by repeated acts of sin, so by repeated acts of holiness must it be dislodged so as to set up counter habits of virtue.

Furthermore, more good actions are required to form a habit of holiness than evil ones to form a habit of sin, in that the former are not aided, as are the latter, by our nature, which is corrupted by sin.

I would add to all that has been said, that if the virtue thou art striving to acquire need it, thou must also practise outward acts agreeing with the inward ; as, for example, using words of love and meekness, and, if possible, doing acts of gentle kindness to those who have in any way vexed and thwarted thee.

And though all such acts, whether outward or inward, be, or seem to thee to be, attended by such weakness of spirit as though they were a grudging service, yet must thou not in any wise neglect them ; for, weak as they are, they will keep thee steady and secure in the battle, and smooth for thee the path to victory.

And be always so well prepared and self-controlled as to be ready to resist the desires of every passion, not such only as are violent and imperious, but the very slightest and gentlest ; for these do but lead the way to greater ones, by which habits of sin are afterwards formed within us.

Sensual Impulses.

It has happened, from the little care which some men have taken to root out of their hearts these lesser desires, that even after having overcome the stronger attacks of the same passion, they have been, when they least expected, assaulted by their old adversary, and have sustained a more absolute and fatal defeat than before.

Further, remember from time to time to mortify and check thine own wishes, even in things lawful, but not necessary. For from such discipline many good results will follow. Thou wilt be more and more prepared and disposed to conquer thyself in other things; thou wilt become strong and skilful in the struggle with temptation; thou wilt escape many devices of the devil, and perform a work well-pleasing unto the Lord.

Beloved, I speak plainly to thee; if, after the manner which I have taught thee, thou wilt persevere faithfully in these holy exercises for reforming and mastering thyself, then do I promise thee, that in a short time thou wilt make great progress, and wilt become spiritual, not in name only, but in reality. But in no other manner, and by no other exercises, however agreeable, yea, even shouldest thou seem to be wholly absorbed in them, and to hold *sweet conversation* with the Lord—by none of

How to Subdue Sensual Impulses.

these can I give thee a sure hope of attaining to true holiness and grace. For this consists not in (as I told thee in the first chapter), nor is it produced by, discipline which is pleasing to us and agreeable to our nature, but by such only as crucifies the flesh with all its works, and renewing the whole man by the practice of the virtues of the gospel, unites him to his Crucified Creator.

There can be no question, that as habits of sin are formed by many and frequent acts of the higher will, yielding itself to the sensual appetite, so, on the contrary, habits of evangelical holiness are acquired by the performance of frequent and repeated acts of conformity to the Divine Will, by which we are called to the practice now of one virtue, now of another.

For as our will, however fiercely assailed by sin, or by the suggestions of our lower nature, can never become vicious or earthly, unless it yield or incline itself to the temptations; so on the other hand, however powerfully called and assailed by Divine Grace and heavenly inspirations, our will can never attain to holiness or to union with God, unless by inward and, if needs be, by outward acts it be made conformable to His.



CHAPTER XIV.

WHAT OUGHT TO BE DONE WHEN THE HIGHER WILL SEEMS TO BE WHOLLY STIFLED AND OVERCOME BY THE LOWER WILL, AND BY OTHER ENEMIES.

IF at times the higher should seem to thee to be powerless against the lower, and its other enemies, because thou feelest not within thee an effectual will against them; stand firm, notwithstanding, and do not quit the field, for thou must always reckon thyself victorious, until thou canst clearly perceive that thou hast given way.

For since this higher will can act without the lower, so if she herself wills it not she can never be compelled by the lower to yield, however sorely assaulted.

For God has in truth endowed our will with such liberty and such strength, that were all the senses, all the evil spirits, nay, the whole world itself, to arm and conspire against her, assaulting and oppressing her with all their strength, she could still, in spite of them, will or *will not*, whatever she likes, with all that

How to Uphold

perfect freedom, and that how often soever, whensoever, howsoever, and to what end soever best pleases her.

And if at any time thy foes so violently assail and press upon thee that thy will is almost stifled, and has, so to speak, no breath to make any act of the will against them, yet do not lose heart, nor throw down thine arms, but in such a case make use of thy tongue, saying,

“ I yield not to thee, I consent not to thee,” after the manner of one whose adversary is upon him, and holds him down, and who, unable to reach him with the point of his sword, strikes at him with the hilt.

And like as he tries to make a spring backwards to wound his enemy with the point, so do thou withdraw into the consideration of thyself the knowledge that thou art nothing, and canst do nothing ; and with faith in God, who can do all things, strike a blow at this passion, thine enemy, saying, “ Help me, Lord ! help me, O my God ! help me, Jesus ; that I yield not unto it.”

Thou mayest also, when thine enemy gives thee time, call in thy reason to aid thy will, meditating on various considerations which may give thee fresh power and breath to resist the enemy. For example, thou art perhaps, when under some persecution, or in trouble, so

the Superior Will.

tempted to impatience; that thy will
, or at least will not, endure it. En-
e it then by bringing reason to bear on
oints as the following, or others like

sider, first, whether thou hast given any
n for the evil under which thou art
g, and so hast deserved it; for if thou
erved it, every rule of justice requires
o bear patiently the punishment which,
hine own hand, thou hast inflicted on

ndly. If free from blame in this in-
, bethink thee of thy other sins, for
God has not yet chastised thee, nor
ou, as thou shouldest have done, duly
ed thyself. Seeing then that God's
changes thy merited punishment, which
have been eternal, into some light
on, which is but temporal, thou shouldest
: it willingly and even thankfully.

rdly. Should thine offences against the
: Majesty seem to thee light, and the
e thou hast endured for them heavy, a
it however which thou canst not law-
ndulge, thou must remember, that it
7 through the strait gate of tribulation
hou canst enter into the kingdom of

How to Uphold the Superior &

Fourthly. That were it even possible to enter herein by an easier way, the love forbids thee so much as to this seeing that the Son of God, with His friends and all His members, has entered that kingdom by the way strewn with thorns and crosses.

Fifthly. What thou hast chiefly to do on this and all other occasions, is to love thy God, who, for the love He beareth thee, views with unspeakable delight every trial or mortification which, as His dear and courageous soldier, thou performest for His return for His love to thee. And be assured, that the more unreasonable the trial seems, and the greater indignity the reason of the quarter whence it cometh, therefore to thee the more vexatious and harder to be borne, so much the more wilt thou be to the Lord, if, in things which are in themselves, and so the more bitter, thou canst approve and love His Decree and Providence, in which all events, howsoever ordered soever they may appear, are in a most perfect rule and order.



nd against Whom to Fight.

CHAPTER XV.

CE TOUCHING THE MANNER OF
IG; AND ESPECIALLY AGAINST
NEMIES, AND WITH WHAT RESO-
WE MUST CONTEND.

ast already seen after what manner
ust fight in order to conquer self,
ned with virtues.

ther, that to obtain a speedier and
ry over thine enemies, it is expe-
necessary, that the conflict should
on daily, and especially against
customing thyself to value as dear
y vexation and insult which the
eap upon thee.

because men are not aware of the
this daily warfare, and make too
t of it, it happens, as I have said
r victories are unfrequent, hardly
ect, and unstable.

I warn thee that thou must fight
stness of soul. And this gift thou
obtain, if thou seek it of God by
sidering, on the one hand, the
rd and fury of thine enemies, and

CHAPTER XV

... valiantly,
... conflict
... he who
... other taken
... enemies so
... to us no
... what danger, and
... letter, we have

THOU hast already
... and be advised
... VI.

... OF CHRIST SHOULD
... IN THE MORNING.

... morning, the first thing
... thy mind's eye is the
... thou art hemmed in, the
... saying that he who fights

... thyself, on one side, thine
... inclination which thou art
... conquer—now standing
... armed, to wound and slay
... the right hand, thy vic-
... s Christ, with His blessed
... in Mary, and her beloved
... and innumerable hosts of

How and against Whom to Fight.

the vast number of their ranks and squadrons; and, on the other, how infinitely greater is the goodness of God, and the love wherewith He loves thee, and how much mightier too are the angels of heaven, and the prayers of the saints who fight on our side.

Animated by this, so many feeble women have been enabled to overcome and conquer all the power and wisdom of the world, all the assaults of the flesh, and all the fury of hell.

Therefore thou must never be disheartened, though at times thine enemy seem to bestrengthening his array against thee, though the struggle threaten to last thy whole lifetime, and though almost certain falls threaten thee on every side; for know furthermore that the whole strength and wisdom of our enemies is in the hands of our Divine Captain, for whose honour we contend; who, valuing us beyond measure, and having Himself called and commanded us to the conflict, will never suffer thee to be overcome. Nay, more; He will Himself fight for thee, and will not fail in His own good time to subdue thy foes before thee; and this to thy greater reward, though He should delay to give thee the victory until the very last day of thy life.

All thou hast concern with is to fight manfully, and never, however many thy wounds, to throw down thine arms, or to take to flight.

Morning Preparation for the Fight.

ly, to spur thee on to fight valiantly, must bear in mind that this is a conflict : there is no escape, and that he who t fight must of necessity be either taken r or slain.

les, we have to do with enemies so with deadly hate as to leave to us no ther of peace or truce.



CHAPTER XVI.

ATWAY THE SOLDIER OF CHRIST SHOULD
THE FIELD EARLY IN THE MORNING.

awaking in the morning, the first thing o be observed by thy mind's eye is the ield, in which thou art hemmed in, the the combat being that he who fights st perish for ever.

: picture to thyself, on one side, thine —that evil inclination which thou art pledged to conquer—now standing thee, ready armed, to wound and slay See also, on the right hand, thy vic- leader, Jesus Christ, with His blessed , the Virgin Mary, and her beloved d Joseph, and innumerable hosts of

Morning Preparation for the

angels and saints, especially St. Michael the archangel; and, on the left hand, the devil and his demon, with all his armies, ready to tempt thee to this passion, and to entice thee to yield.

Then shalt thou seem to hear a voice, which is thy Guardian Angel, thus speaking:

“Thou art to fight this day against many other enemies. Let not thy heart be troubled, thy spirit faint; yield not, either from fear or from any other cause; for our Lord Jesus Christ, our Captain, stands beside thee, with his glorious hosts, and will fight for thee against all thine enemies, and will not suffer them to prevail against thee, or to overcome thee.”

“Only stand firm, do violence to thyself, and bear the pain which such discipline will cause thee. Cry incessantly from the bottom of thine heart, and call upon the name of our Lord, assuredly wilt thou gain the victory. Be not afraid, thou art weak and inexperienced, if thine enemies are strong and many, yet much more is the strength of Him who has created and sustained thee; and, beyond all measure and all calculation, more powerful is His Son, mightier is thy God and His will, than the will of all thine enemies together. Fight valiantly then, and do not yield to pain; for it is this toil in resisting the flesh and evil inclination, this painful struggle against *sinful habits*, which shall gain thee the crown of life.”

Morning Preparation for the Fight.

and win for thee a treasure wherewith to purchase the kingdom of heaven, and the everlasting union of thy soul to God.

Begin the conflict in the name of the Lord, with the armour of distrust of self, and trust in God, with prayer and spiritual exercise, and challenge to the battle thy foe; that is, that inclination, whatever it be, which, according to the order above laid down, thou hast resolved to overcome. Do this now by open resistance, or again by deep abhorrence, or yet again by acts of the contrary virtue, wounding him again and again, even unto death, to please thy Lord, Who, with the whole Church triumphant, is looking on, watching the combat.

I tell thee again, thou must not weary of the struggle, but remember the bounden duty of all to serve and please God, and the absolute necessity of fighting, this being a battle from which none can escape without wounds or death. I tell thee, moreover, that if, as a deserter, thou wouldest fly from God, and give thyself over to the world and the delights of the flesh, thou wilt still be forced, in spite of thyself, to labour in the sweat of thy brow against many and many an adversary, who will pierce thy heart with deadly anguish.

Consider then what folly it would be to incur all *this* toil and trouble, which does but

Against what **We** must first **fight**.

lead to greater toil and endless trouble, with spiritual death, in order to avoid that which will soon be over, and which will lead us to life eternal and infinite blessedness in the everlasting enjoyment of our God.



CHAPTER XVII.

OF THE ORDER TO BE OBSERVED IN THE
CONFLICT WITH OUR EVIL PASSIONS.

IT is of great importance that we should know how to observe a due order in this combat, lest—as is the manner of too many, to their great loss—we fight in a casual or perfunctory manner. The order of battle to be observed against thine enemies and evil inclinations should be as follows :

Look well into thine heart, and search diligently till thou discover by what thoughts and actions it is encompassed, and by what passion it is most tyrannously governed ; then against this first direct thine attack. If meanwhile thou art assaulted by other enemies, turn against the one nearest thee, and which threatens thee at the moment, but fail not to *return afterwards* to the chief point of attack.

CHAPTER XVIII.

**OF THE WAY TO RESIST SUDDEN IMPULSES
OF THE PASSIONS.**

IF not yet well-accustomed to ward off sudden attacks, whether arising from injuries or other adverse circumstances, it is well, in order to acquire such a habit, to anticipate such attacks, and desire them over and over again, thus learning to await them with a ready mind.

The way to forestall them is to consider the bent of thy passions, and also the places where, and the persons with whom, thou art wont to converse, whence thou mayest easily conjecture what is likely to happen.

And shouldest thou meet with any other vexatious circumstance, which thou hadst not foreseen, although thou wilt find thy soul strengthened to meet other evils for which it was not prepared, yet mayest thou also, besides, make use of the following help.

At the very first stroke of the unexpected injury or trouble, whatever it be, rouse thyself at once, *and lift up thy heart unto God,*

How to Resist Sudden Impulses.

reflecting on His unspeakable goodness and love to thee, which sends thee this trial, that by enduring it for the love of Him, **thou** mayest be thereby the more **purified**, and brought nearer and united **unto** Him.

And realizing **how** greatly it pleases Him that **thou** shouldst suffer it, turn next to thyself, and with a sharp rebuke say, "Oh, why so reluctant to bear this cross, which is sent to thee, not by man, but by thy Father Who is in heaven?" Then turn to the cross, and embrace it with all possible patience and joy, saying, "O cross, formed by Divine Providence before I was born! O cross, endeared to me by the dear love of my crucified Lord, nail me now to thee, that so I may give myself to Him Who died upon thee to redeem me!"

And if at first the passion prevail against thee, so that thou remain wounded, and unable to raise thy heart to God, strive even then to do as at the beginning, and fight as if thou wert not wounded.

The most effectual remedy, however, against these sudden impulses, is to remove betimes the cause whence they spring.

Thus if thou discover that, through thine affection for any thing, thou art wont, so often as it presents itself unto thee, to fall into a *sudden* agitation of mind, the best precaution

How to Fight against the Flesh.

for the future is an habitual effort to deprive it of this effect.

But if the agitation proceed not from a thing, but from a person who is disagreeable to thee that every little action of his annoys or irritates thee, the remedy in this case is, to force thyself to love him, and to hold him dear, not only because he is a creature like yourself, formed by the same Almighty Hand, and created anew by the same Divine Blood, but also because he offers thee an opportunity, if thou wilt accept it, of becoming like unto thy Lord, who is kind and loving unto all men.



CHAPTER XIX.

HOW TO RESIST THE LUST OF THE FLESH.

THIS temptation must be resisted in a way peculiar to itself, and different from all others.

In order therefore to fight successfully three periods must be observed.

1. Before we are tempted.
2. When we are tempted.
3. *And after the temptation is over.*

How to Fight against the Flesh.

I. Before the temptation the struggle will be against those things which are wont to occasion it.

First. Thou must battle against the vice, not by attempting to face it, but by avoiding, to the utmost of thy power, every occasion and every person whereby thou mayest fall into the slightest danger.

And if compelled at times to converse with such, let it be done briefly, with a grave and modest demeanour, and using words of severity, rather than of excessive tenderness and affability.

Neither be confident in thyself, because thou art still, and hast been, after many years' practice, free from temptations of the flesh; for this accursed vice will do in an hour what in many years it has failed to effect, often making its preparations stealthily; and it hurts the more grievously, and wounds the more incurably, the more friendly the form under which it appears, and the less suspicion it incites.

And oftentimes there is more to be feared—as experience has shown, and still shows—when intercourse seems perfectly legitimate, as with kindred, or in the discharge of duties, or again with persons whose virtues make them *beloved*. For with this too frequent and un-

How to Fight against the Flesh.

and intercourse, the poisonous pleasure of which mingles itself, instilling its venom by degrees, till it penetrates into the very depths of the soul, and clouds the reason more and more, until no account is made of things which are really dangerous; such as loving looks, words of mutual endearment, and the pleasures of conversation, and so step by step fall at last into destruction, or into some fatal temptation, most hard and toilsome to overcome.

The more I say to thee, Fly! for thou art weak and feeble. Trust not to being moistened and cooled, as it were, with the water of a good and holy purpose, and resolved rather to die than to offend God; for, by frequent stirring, the heat of the fire will gradually dry up the oil of thy good purpose, and when thou sinkest, it will so inflame thee that thou respect neither kindred nor friends, nor father, nor life, nor honour, nor all the pleasures of this world, nor the pains of hell. Therefore fly, fly, if indeed thou wouldst avoid being overtaken, led captive, and slain.

Secondly. Avoid idleness, and be vigilant and active, with the thoughts and deeds suitable to the state of life.

Thirdly. Never rebel against the will of thy superiors, but show them a ready obedience,

How to Fight against the 3

executing promptly all their commands with more willingness obey such : thee, and are most opposed to thy n and inclination.

Fourthly. Beware of forming rash of thy neighbour, especially with this vice; and if he have plainly f pity on him; be not bitter against hold him in contempt; try rather from his fall the fruit of humility knowledge, confessing thyself to b and ashes, drawing nigher unto God and shunning more carefully than intercourse wherein there may be shadow of danger.

For if thou art ready to judge a others, God will correct thee to thy suffer thee to fall into the same fault to convince thee of thy pride, the humiliation both sins may be remed

And even if thou shouldst not fa sin, yet remember that unless thou thy uncharitable judgment of other will be one to cause great concern.

Fifthly and lastly. Beware, lest f self gifted with some enjoyment c delights, thou feel a certain vain co therein, and persuade thyself that something, and that thine enemies

How to Fight against the Flesh.

longer able to attack thee, because thou seemest to thyself to regard them with disgust, hatred, and loathing. For if thou art put off thy guard in this matter, thou wilt easily fall.

II. In the hour of temptation consider whether it proceeds from inward or outward causes.

By outward, I mean curiosity of the eyes or ears, over-niceness in dress, habits and conversations which incite to this sin.

The remedies in such cases are purity, modesty, refusing to see or hear things which incite to this vice, and, as I said before, flight.

The inward causes are either the rebellion of the body or thoughts of the mind, proceeding either from our evil habits, or else from suggestions of the devil.

The rebellion of the body must be mortified by fasts, disciplines, hair-shirts, vigils, and other like hard dealing with the body, but undertaken with discretion, and under advice.

Against unholy thoughts, from whatever source arising, the remedies are as follows:

1. Constant occupation in the various duties proper to our state of life.
2. Prayer and meditation.

Prayer should be made in the following manner:

How to Fight against the Flesh.

When thou art first conscious of the presence of these evil thoughts, or even of such as may signify their approach, fly instantly in spirit to the crucified Saviour, saying, "My JESUS! my sweet JESUS! help me speedily, that I fall not into the hands of this enemy."

And sometimes clasping in spirit the cross on which thy Lord is extended, and kissing repeatedly the wounds in His sacred Feet, say lovingly, "O beauteous wounds! chaste wounds! holy wounds! wound now this miserable, impure heart of mine, and free it from all that is offensive in thy sight."

At the moment when temptations to carnal delights assail thee, I would not have thee meditate upon certain points, which are recommended in many books as remedies against this temptation; such as the vileness of this vice, its insatiableness, the loathing, the bitterness, which follow it, the peril and ruin of estate, life, honour, and such like.

For this is so far from being a sure way to overcome the temptation that it may prove hurtful rather than otherwise; for if, on the one hand, the mind drives away these thoughts, on the other, it gives us opportunity, and exposes us to the danger of taking delight in them, and of consenting thereto. Therefore *the true remedy* in all these cases is flight, not

How to Fight against the Flesh.

from these thoughts alone, but from everything, however contrary to them, which may bring them before us.

Let then thy meditation for this end be on the Life and Passion of thy crucified Redeemer.

And if, during thy meditation, the same thoughts again present themselves against thy will, and molest thee more than usual, which will frequently happen, do not therefore despond nor leave off thy meditation, but pursue it with all possible intensity, not turning from it even to repel such thoughts, but giving thyself no more concern about them than if they in no way belonged to thee. There is no better method than this of resisting them, how incessant soever be their attacks.

Thou wilt then conclude thy meditation with this, or some similar supplication, "Deliver me, O my Creator and Redeemer, from mine enemies, to the honour of Thy Passion and of Thine unspeakable goodness." Suffer not thy thoughts to return again to the sin; for the bare recollection of it is not without danger.

Neither stay at any time to reason with such temptations, whether thou hast consented unto them or not; for this is a device of the devil, who seeks, under the appearance of good, to disquiet thee, and make thee distrustful and faint-hearted; or hopes by entangling thee in

How to Fight against the Flesh.

such discourses to draw thee into some sinful indulgence.

Therefore in this temptation (when the consent is not evident) it is sufficient that thou confess the whole briefly to some spiritual adviser, and then rest satisfied with his opinion, without thinking of it more.

But be sure to reveal faithfully every thought to him, neither be restrained from doing so by shame, nor by any human consideration.

For if, in dealing with all our enemies, we have need of the grace of humility, in this case more than in any other, we are bound to humble ourselves, this vice being almost always the punishment of pride.

III. When the time of temptation is past, what thou hast to do is this: However free, however perfectly secure thou mayest feel from danger, keep far away from those objects which gave rise to the temptation, even shouldst thou be induced to do otherwise for some good and useful end. For this is a deceit of our corrupt nature, and a snare of our cunning adversary, who transforms himself into an angel of light that he may bring us into darkness.



CHAPTER XX.

OF THE WAY TO COMBAT SLOTH.

TO avoid falling into the miserable bondage of sloth, which would not only hinder thy progress towards perfection, but also deliver thee into the hands of thine enemies, thou must avoid all curiosity and earthly attachments, and also every kind of employment which belongs not to thy state of life.

Next, thou must earnestly endeavour to obey readily every good inspiration from above, and every command of thy superiors—doing everything at the time and in the manner which is pleasing to them.

Never delay even for a moment ; for that one little delay will soon be followed by another, and then by a third, and then by others ; and to these latter the senses will yield more easily than at the beginning, being already allured and taken captive by the pleasure they have tasted.

Hence the duty to be performed is either begun too late, or sometimes altogether neglected as being too irksome.

Thus gradually a habit of sloth is acquired,

How to Combat Sloth.

which in time reduces us to such a state that, ashamed of our present excessive sloth, which we cannot disguise from ourselves, we purpose, even while bound hand and foot by it, to be in future very diligent and active.

The poison of sloth runs through everything we do, not only infecting the will by making it hate exertion, but blinding also the understanding, so that it cannot see how vain and unfounded are its intentions of doing promptly and diligently at some future season that which should be done at once, but which is either voluntarily neglected altogether, or deferred to another time.

Nor is it enough that we do at once what we have to do. We must, in order to do it as perfectly as possible, do it at the very time required by the nature and quality of the work, and with all befitting diligence.

For that is not diligence, but the subtlest form of sloth, which leads us to do our work before its time, not seeking to do it well, but despatching it hastily that we may then give ourselves up to the enjoyment of a sluggish repose, on which our thoughts have been dwelling whilst we have been hurrying over our business.

All this great evil proceeds from want of duly considering the value of a good work when done

How to Combat Sloth.

at its right time, and with a determination to brave the toil and difficulties which the sin of sloth puts in the way of untried soldiers.

Thou shouldest therefore often remember, that a single lifting up of the heart to God, a single bending of the knee in His honour, is of more value than all the treasures of the world ; and that each time we do violence to ourselves and to our sinful passions, angels bring to our souls from the kingdom of heaven a crown of glorious victory.

Recollect also, on the other hand, that God gradually withdraws from the slothful the grace which He had once bestowed upon them, while He increases that of the diligent, permitting them to enter at last into His joy.

If thou art not at first able to boldly encounter toil and hardship, hide them from thyself, that they appear not to thee so formidable as sloth would represent them.

The work which thou hast now before thee is, perhaps, to acquire some virtue, by many repeated acts of it, and with many days of toil ; and the enemies to be overcome seem to thee many and strong. Begin then these acts as if thou hadst but a few of them to perform, but a few days' conflict to endure. Fight only against one enemy at a time, as if there were no more to be resisted, and in full confidence

How to Combat Sloth.

that, with the help of God, thou wilt be stronger than those against you. In this manner sloth will begin to lose ground, and will give way at last to the gradual entrance of the opposite virtue.

The same holds good in prayer. One hour of prayer is perhaps necessary for thee, and if this seems a fearful matter to sloth, represent to her that thou wouldest pray but for ten minutes, thou wilt then easily pass on to another period, and so on until the whole hour is passed.

But if in the second, or any other of these divisions, thou shouldest feel too violent a distaste and difficulty, leave off for awhile, lest thou become weary, but return to it in a little time.

Thou shouldest pursue the same method with respect to manual labours, when thou art called upon to undertake things which to sloth seem interminable and difficult, and so cause thee much disturbance. Begin nevertheless courageously and quietly with one, as if thou hadst no more to do; and when thou hast diligently accomplished this go on to the next, and thou wilt thus be able to perform all the others with far less toil than with thy sloth would have seemed possible.

For if thou dost not follow this method,

How to Combat Sloth.

and encounter resolutely the toil and hardship which lie in thy way, the vice of sloth will gain such a mastery over thee, that thou wilt be for ever harassed and vexed, not only by the present toil and difficulty, which will always attend the first exercises of virtue, but even by the distant prospect of them. Thou wilt be for ever in fear of being tried and assailed by enemies, or of being laden with some fresh burden, so that even in the time of peace thou wilt live in a perpetual unrest.

Know also, my beloved, that this vice of sloth will not only with its secret poison gradually kill the first and feeble roots which would in time have produced habits of virtue, but even the roots of habits already acquired. Like a worm in wood, it will go on insensibly gnawing and eating away the very marrow of spiritual life. By this means does the devil seek to ensnare and delude all of us, but especially those who seek to become spiritual.

Watch therefore, pray and labour diligently, and delay not to weave the web of thy wedding garment, that thou be found ready adorned to meet the Bridegroom.

And remember day by day, that He Who gives thee the morning does not promise thee the evening, and though He gives the evening *yet promises not the morrow.*

How to Regulate

Spēnd, therefore, every moment of every passing hour according to God's will as if it were thy last, and so much the more as for each moment thou wilt have to give the strictest account.

I conclude by warning thee to count that day lost in which, though thou mayest have despatched much business therein, thou hast neither gained some victory over thine evil inclinations and thy self-will, nor returned thanks to thy Lord for His mercies, and especially for His bitter Passion endured for thee, and for His sweet and fatherly correction in having made thee worthy to receive at His Hand the priceless treasure of suffering.



CHAPTER XXI.

OF THE REGULATION OF THE OUTWARD SENSES, AND HOW WE MAY PASS ON FROM THESE TO THE CONTEMPLATION OF THE DIVINITY.

GREAT watchfulness and constant exercise are needful for the due ordering and regulating of the outward senses. For the *appetite*, which is, as it were, the captain of

the Outward Senses.

our corrupt nature, is bent upon seeking after pleasure and enjoyment; and being unable, by itself alone, of attaining unto them, it makes use of the senses as its soldiers, and as natural instruments for seizing on objects, whose images it draws to itself, and impresses on the mind. Hence arises the sensation of pleasure, which, by means of the close connection subsisting between the mind and the flesh, spreads through all the senses which are capable of such pleasure, infecting both soul and body with a common contagion which corrupts the whole.

Thou seest the evil, mark the remedy.

Be careful not to let thy senses stray freely where they will, nor to use them for the sake of pleasure alone, and where neither usefulness, necessity, nor any good end, leads thee to do so. And if, through want of watchfulness, they have already wandered too far, recall them instantly, or so regulate them, that instead of remaining as before, in a miserable captivity to vain pleasures, they may gather a noble spoil from each passing object, and bring it home to thy soul, that she, collected within herself, may, with a steadier flight, spread her wings towards heaven in the contemplation of God. This may be done as follows:

When any object presents itself to one of

How to Regulate

thy outward senses, separate in your mind, from the material substance, the spirit which is in it, and reflect, that of itself, it possesses nothing of all that which appears to thy senses, but that all is the work of God, Who by His unseen Spirit endows it with the being, beauty, goodness, or what virtue soever belongs to it. Then rejoice that thy Lord alone is the Cause and Principle of so great and such varied perfections, and that in Himself they are all contained in the highest degree; all created excellencies being but the minutest degrees of His Divine and Infinite Perfections. When absorbed in the act of admiring objects of a noble nature, let thy mind bring down the creature to its own nothingness; fixing thy mind's eye on the Great Creator therein present, Who endued it with that nature, and delighting thyself in Him alone, thou wilt say, "O Divine Essence, to be desired above all things, how do I rejoice that Thou alone art the Infinite Principle of every created being!"

In like manner, at the sight of trees, herbs, or such like objects, thou wilt understand, that the life which they have, they have not of themselves, but of the Spirit which thou seest not, and which alone quickens them. Then thou mayest say, "Behold here the true Life, from Whom, in Whom, and by Whom all

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the Outward Senses.

live and grow! O living Joy of this

the sight of any of the brute creation,
lift raise thy thoughts to God, Who gave
feeling and power of motion, saying, "O
First Mover of all that moveth, Thou art
firm immovable, how do I rejoice in Thy
wisdom and durability!"

if allured by the beauty of the creature,
see that which thou seest from the spirit
thou seest not, and consider that all
that appears outwardly fair, springs only
from the invisible Spirit, from Whom is that
divine beauty, and say joyfully, "Behold,
these are streamlets from the Uncreated Foun-
tain-head, these are drops from the Infinite
Ocean of all good! Oh! how does my inmost
soul rejoice at the thought of that eternal,
divine Beauty, which is the source and origin
of all created beauty!"

When discovering in others goodness,
wisdom, justice, or similar virtues, make the
contemplation in thy mind, and say to thy
soul 'O most rich Treasure-house of all vir-
tue, how greatly do I rejoice that from Thee,
through Thee alone, flows every good;
at all in comparison with Thy Divine
Essence is as nothing! I thank Thee, Lord,
God, and for every other good gift which

How to Regulate the Outward

Thou hast vouchsafed to my neighbour, Lord, my poverty and : this very virtue !”

In stretching out thy hand to c reflect that God is the first cause of and thou but His living instrumer ing thy thoughts to Him, say t great is my inward joy, supreme that without Thee I can do nothi Thou art indeed the first and chie all things.”

When eating or drinking, consi God who makes thy food pleas Delighting thyself therefore in thou mayest say, “Rejoice, O n as there is no true contentment God, so in Him alone thou m things delight thyself!”

If thy senses are gratified by odour, rest not in the enjoymen pass on in thought to the Lord, this delight comes, and inwardly c this thought thou wilt say, “Gra that as I rejoice because all swe from Thee, so may my soul, c freed from all earthly pleasure, asc as a sweet savour acceptable unto

When thou art delighted with a of sweet sounds, let thine heart turn

Of Regulating the Senses.

say, "How do I joy, O my Lord and my God, in Thine Infinite Perfections, which not only produce a more than heavenly harmony in Thine Own Self, but also unite in one marvellous concert the angels in heaven, and all created beings."



CHAPTER XXII.

HOW THE SAME THINGS ARE TO US THE MEANS OF REGULATING OUR SENSES, AND LEAD US ON TO MEDITATE ON THE INCARNATE WORD, IN THE MYSTERIES OF HIS LIFE AND PASSION.

I HAVE already shown thee the way to raise our minds from sensible objects to the contemplation of God. Now learn a way of taking occasion from the same to meditate on the Incarnate Word, and reflect on the most sacred mysteries of His Life and Passion.

All things in the universe may serve to this end, if, as I said before, thou wilt view God in them as the sole First Cause, Who has given them all their being, and beauty, and excellence. Passing on from thence, consider how great *and boundless is His goodness*, Who, being the

Of Regulating the Senses.

sole Source and Lord of all creation, was pleased to descend so low as to become Man, to suffer and die for man, thus permitting the very works of His Hands to arm themselves against Him and crucify Him.

Many things then will bring these holy mysteries before thy mind's eye—such as arms, cords, scourges, pillars, thorns, reeds, nails, hammers, and other instruments of His Passion.

A poor hovel will recall to our memory the stable and the manger of our Lord. Rain will remind us of the drops of Divine Blood which fell from His most sacred Body in the garden, and watered the earth. The rocks which we see will represent to us those which were rent asunder at His death. The earth will bring to remembrance the earthquake at that hour; the sun, the darkness which then covered it. The sight of water will speak to us of that stream which flowed forth from His most sacred Side.

The same may be said of other like things.

Let the taste of wine or other liquid remind thee of thy Lord's vinegar and gall.

If sweet perfumes refresh thee, think of the ill savour of the dead bodies which He smelt on Calvary.

When clothing thyself, recollect that the

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Word clothed Himself with human
at He might clothe thee with His

unclothing thyself, remember Christ,
s stripped of His garments, to be
and crucified for thee.

u hear the shouts and cries of the
e, recall those hateful voices, "Away
m, away with Him ! Crucify Him,
him !" which resounded in His Divine

en as the clock strikes think of that
of deep sorrow which the heart of
s pleased to endure in the garden, as
of His approaching death and Passion
fall upon Him ; or imagine the sound
heavy blows which nailed Him to the

y occasion of grief or sorrow which
itself, whether thine own or another's,
at all these things are as nothing
l to the inconceivable anguish which
nd wrung the Soul and Body of thy



Of Governing our Senses.

CHAPTER XXIII.

OF OTHER WAYS OF REGULATING OUR SENSES ACCORDING TO THE DIFFERENT OCCASIONS WHICH PRESENT THEMSELVES.

HAVING now seen how to raise the mind from sensible things to the contemplation of the Divinity, and to the mysteries of the Incarnate Word, I will here add some helps for various subjects of meditation, that, as the tastes of souls are many and various, so also may be the food supplied. This may be useful not only to simple-minded persons, but also to those more talented and more advanced in the spiritual life, who nevertheless may not at all times be equally disposed and ready for higher contemplations.

Nor hast thou any reason to fear perplexity from the variety of the methods described, if thou wilt only keep to the rule of discretion, and attend to the advice of others, which not in this instance only, but on all occasions, I would have thee follow with all humility and confidence.

On beholding so many things of earth which

Of Governing our Senses.

are pleasing to the sight and prized, consider that all these are vile as dust compared with heavenly riches, after which, despising the whole world, aspire with undivided affections.

When looking towards the sun, reflect that thy soul is brighter and more beautiful than it, if thou art in favour with thy Creator; but that otherwise it is blacker and more hateful than the darkness of hell.

When raising thy bodily eyes to the heavens above thee, let those of thy mind pierce even to the heaven of heavens, and there fix thyself in thought, as in the place prepared for thy eternal and blessed abode, if thou shalt live holily upon earth.

On hearing the songs of birds, or other sweet strains, lift up thy heart to the songs of Paradise, where resounds a never-ending alleluia; and pray the Lord to make thee worthy to praise Him in company with those heavenly spirits, for ever and ever.

If thou art conscious of taking delight in the beauties of the creature, remember that there lies hidden beneath the deadly serpent, ready and eager to slay, or at least to wound, thee, and say to him, "O accursed serpent, how wilily dost thou lay wait to devour me!" Then, turning to God, say, "Blessed be Thou, O my God, Who hast discovered to me the

Of Governing our Senses.

secret enemy, and delivered me from his ravening jaws!"

Then fly at once from the allurements to the wounds of thy crucified Saviour, letting thy mind rest in them, considering how cruelly thy Lord suffered in His most sacred Flesh to free thee from thy sins, and to make all carnal delights hateful to thee.

I would remind thee of another way of escape from this perilous enticement; namely, to consider well what will be, after death, the condition of that object which now so delights thee.

When walking, remember that every step brings thee nearer unto death.

Let the flight of birds and the flowing of water remind thee that thy life is hastening to its close with much greater swiftness.

Let stormy winds, lightning and thunder, remind thee of the tremendous day of judgment; and, kneeling down, worship God, and pray Him to give thee time and grace to prepare thyself to appear then before His exalted Majesty.

In the variety of accidents which may befall thee, exercise thyself thus. When, for example, thou art oppressed by sadness or melancholy, or art tried by heat, cold, or the like, lift up thine heart to that Eternal Will which, for thine

Of Governing our Senses.

and, willeth that at such a time and in measure thou shouldest feel this dis-

. Then, rejoicing in this manifestation of God, and at the opportunity of

Him in the way He is pleased to say in thine heart, "Behold in me the intent of the Divine Will, which has from His mercy lovingly ordered that I should now undergo this trial. All praise be to Thee, my merciful Lord, for the same!"

When any good thought arises in thy mind, instantly to God, and acknowledging it from Him, give Him thanks for it.

When reading, behold thy Lord in the words and receive them as coming from His Lips.

When looking upon the holy cross, remember the standard of thy warfare, and that thou wilt fall into the hands of enemies; but by following it, thou wilt ascend to heaven, laden with glorious spoils.

When thou seest a church, thou mayest, by her devout reflections, consider that it is the temple of God, and therefore, dwelling-place, thou oughtest to keep it pure and spotless.

When thou beholdest a picture of the Virgin, thank God that she was ever chaste; that she do the will of thy God; that she

Of Governing our Senses.

brought forth and nourished the Redeemer of the world ; and that her example never fails us in our spiritual conflict.

Let pictures of the saints represent to thee so many champions, who, having courageously run their course, have opened a way for thee, in which, if thou wilt press onward, thou also shalt be with them crowned with immortal glory.*

And to express briefly the general rule by which thou must regulate thy senses, be watchful ; so that in all the occurrences of your life, thou be moved and drawn, not by hatred or love of them, but by the will of God alone, loving and hating only what God wills thee to love and hate.

And observe that I have not given the above methods for governing the senses that thou mightest dwell upon them ; for thy mind should almost always be fixed upon thy Lord, Who wills that thou shouldst apply thyself to conquer thine enemies and thy sinful passions, both by resisting them, and by making acts of the contrary virtues. I have given them to thee only, that thou mayest know how to rule thyself when in need of them.

* Rules are here given for the observation of devotions at stated hours, which are applicable only to the inmates of religious houses.

How to Rule the Tongue.

thou must know that there is little fruit in the multiplicity of spiritual exercises, however good in themselves. Nay, this very often leads to perplexity of mind, self-love, unsteadfastness, and the snares of the devil.



CHAPTER XXIV.

HOW TO RULE THE TONGUE.

It is very necessary that the tongue be well ruled and bridled, because every one is disposed to let it run on and discourse things which are most agreeable to the

Each speaking springs commonly from pride. We persuade ourselves that we know a great deal, we take delight in our own conceits, and endeavour by a storm of words to impress our opinions on the minds of others, that we may gain an ascendancy over them, as though they needed instruction from us.

It is not possible to express in few words many evils which arise from overmuch speaking.

Idleness is the mother of idleness, the

How to Rule the Tongue.

sign of ignorance and folly, the door of slander, the minister of lies, the destroyer of fervent devotion.

A multitude of words adds strength to evil passions, by which the tongue is the more easily led on to thoughtless utterance.

Do not indulge in long conversations with those who are unwilling to hear thee, lest thou weary them ; nor with those who love to listen to thee, lest thou exceed the bounds of modesty.

Avoid loud and dictatorial speech, which is not only odious in itself, but is also a mark of presumption and vanity.

Never speak of thyself or thy doings, nor of thy kindred, but in cases of absolute necessity, and then with all possible reserve and brevity. If others seem to speak overmuch of themselves, try to view their conduct in a favourable light ; but do not imitate them, even though they should speak in a humble and self-accusing way.

Speak as little as may be of thy neighbour or of anything that concerns him, unless an opportunity offers to say something in his favour.

Speak freely of God, and especially of His love and goodness, but with fear and caution, lest even here thou fall into error : rather take *pleasure in listening while others speak* c

How to Rule the Tongue.

Him, treasuring up their words in the depth of thine heart.

Let the sound of men's voices strike only upon thine ear; do thou meanwhile lift up thy heart to the Lord; and if thou must needs listen to their discourse, in order to understand and apply it, yet neglect not to cast thine eye thoughtfully to heaven, where thy God dwelleth, and contemplate His loftiness, as He ever beholds thy vileness.

Let the things which thy heart suggests to thee to say be well considered, before they pass on to the tongue; for thou wilt perceive that much would be better kept unspoken. And I still further assure thee that not a few even of those which thou wilt then think it well to speak would be far better buried in silence; and so thou wilt perceive if, when the occasion for speaking is past, thou reflectest on what thou hast said.

Silence, my beloved, is a strong fortress in the spiritual combat, and a sure pledge of victory.

Silence is the friend of him who distrusts himself, and trusts in God; it is the guardian of the spirit of prayer, and a wonderful help in the practice of holiness.

In order to accustom thyself to silence, consider frequently the evils and perils of

How to Preserve Peace of Mind.

talkativeness, and the great benefit of silence. Love this virtue; and in order to acquire the practice of it, occasionally keep silence even at times when thou mightest lawfully speak; provided this be not to the prejudice of thyself or others.

And to attain this it will greatly help thee to withdraw from society; for in the place of men thou wilt have the society of angels, of saints, and of God Himself.

Lastly, bear in mind the combat which thou hast in hand, that seeing how much thou hast to do, thou mayest the more willingly refrain from all needless words.



CHAPTER XXV.

THAT IN ORDER TO FIGHT SUCCESSFULLY AGAINST HIS ENEMIES, THE SOLDIER OF CHRIST MUST AVOID, AS MUCH AS POSSIBLE, ALL AGITATION AND DISQUIET OF MIND.

AS we should do our utmost to regain our peace of mind when lost, so we must learn that there is nothing which ought to take *it away*, or even disturb it.

How to Preserve Peace of Mind.

have indeed good reason to mourn over
our sins, yet with a quiet sorrow, as I
already shewn more than once, so also
it disquiet, but with a holy feeling of
it, should we pity all other sinners, and
at least inwardly over their offences.

So other sad and distressing events, such
as sickness, wounds, or death of nearest
relatives, pestilence, fire, war, or such like
calamities, though these, being painful to nature,
are the most part shunned by the men of
the world, yet may we, by the grace of God,
not only accept them, but even embrace them,
as just punishments to the wicked, and oppor-
tunities of virtue to the good. For on these
things our Lord God Himself views them
with approbation; and following His Will, we
must pass with a calm and quiet spirit through
the bitterness and crosses of this life. And
remember that all anxiety is displeasing in His
eyes, for be it what it may, it is never free
from imperfection, and always springs from
the evil root of self-love.

Be therefore a sentinel ever on the watch,
so soon as he discovers any cause of
sorrow and disquiet, shall give the alarm to
thyself to take up arms for thy defence.

Remember that all these and such like
things are *not real evils*, though outwardly they

How to Preserve Peace of Mind.

seem so, nor can they rob us of any real good, but are all ordered or permitted by God for the righteous ends I have mentioned, or for others doubtless most just and holy, though we think otherwise.

So may the most untoward event work for us much good, if we do but keep the soul in peace and quiet ; else all our efforts will be of little or no use.

Besides, when the heart is disquieted it is always exposed to manifold assaults of the enemy ; and moreover, in such a state we cannot discern the right path, and the sure road to holiness.

Our enemy above all things hates this peace as being the dwelling-place of God's Holy Spirit, Who works therein great wonders, and often under a friendly garb tries to deprive us of it by means of sundry desires which have a semblance of good ; but their deceitful nature may be known by this test, among others, that they rob us of our peace of mind.

Therefore, to remedy so great an evil, when the sentinel gives warning of any new desire do not open the door of thy heart, until, freed from all self-will, thou first offer it to God and confessing thy blindness and ignorance earnestly beseech Him to show thee whether *this desire* comes from Him or from thy

How to Preserve Peace of Mind.

adversary. Thou shouldest also have recourse, when possible, to the judgment of thy spiritual adviser.

And though the desire should come from God, yet before thou dost act upon it, restrain thy too great eagerness; for a work, entered upon after such mortification, will be far more acceptable to Him, than if done with natural eagerness; nay, sometimes it may be that the mortification will be more pleasing to Him than the work itself.

In this way, driving from thee all evil desires, and not acting upon the good ones till thou have first subdued thy natural impulses, thou wilt keep the fortress of thy heart in peace and safety.

And in order to keep it in perfect peace, it is also needful to defend and guard it from certain inward stings of conscience and feelings of remorse, which sometimes come from the devil, though they seem to come from God, because they accuse thee of some failing. By their fruits thou shalt know them.

If they humble thee, make thee diligent in good works, and do not rob thee of thy trust in God, thou shouldest receive them with thankfulness as from God. But if they occasion disquiet, and make thee fearful, distrustful, *slothful*, and faint in good deeds,

How to Preserve Peace of Mind.

then be sure that they come from the end do not listen to them, but go on with exercise.

And moreover, since disquiet more commonly arises in our heart at the approach of adverse events, thou hast two things to order to defend thyself against this assault.

One is, to consider and see whether these events are adverse to the spiritual life, self-love and self-will.

For if they be adverse to self-will, or self-love (thy chief and greatest enemy), thou shouldest not call them adverse, but rather them special favours and helps from the High God, to be received with a joyful thankful heart.

And though they be adverse to the spiritual life thou must not even then lose thy peace of mind, as I will teach thee in the following chapter.

The other thing is, to lift up thy heart to God, accepting all things blindly from the pitiful hand of His Divine Providence, being full of manifold blessings, which thou yet knowest not, and seeking to know no further.



CHAPTER XXVI.

WHAT WE SHOULD DO WHEN WOUNDED.

WHEN thou feelest thyself wounded, from having through thy weakness, or even at times through wilfulness, and with forethought, fallen into some sin, be not discouraged nor disquieted because of this, but turn at once to God, and say unto Him :

“Behold, O Lord, what of myself I have done ; and what indeed but falls could be expected from me ?”

And then, after a short pause, humble thyself in thine own eyes, bewail for having offended thy Lord, and without discouragement be full of indignation against thine evil passions, especially against that one which caused thy fall.

Then say :

“Nor even here, Lord, should I have stopped, if Thy goodness had not withheld me !”

And here give Him thanks, and love Him more than ever, wondering at His great mercy, in that, when thou hadst just offended Him, He stretched out His right hand to save thee from another fall.

How to Act in Falls.

Lastly, say with full trust in his infinite mercy:
"Forgive me, Lord, for Thy mercy's sake,
suffer me not to depart from Thee, nor to be
separated from Thee, nor evermore to offend
Thee."

And this done, do not sit down to think
whether God has pardoned thee or not; for
this is nothing else but pride, disquiet of mind,
loss of time, under colour of various fair
pretexts, and a delusion of the devil. But
committing thyself freely to the merciful hands
of God, go on with thine exercise as if thou
hadst not fallen.

And if thou shouldest fall many times, and
receive many wounds in the day, do what I
have taught thee, with no less faith, the second,
even the last time, than the first;
the sin more

How to Act in Falls.

thyself, renewing it repeatedly, even after a single fall.

And if after a fault thou feel uneasy, confused, and fearful, the first thing to be done is to recover thy peace and tranquillity of mind, and with it thy confidence also. Armed with these, turn again to the Lord ; for the disquiet thou feelest on account of thy sin, comes not from having offended God, but from having injured thyself.

The way to recover this peace is, for the time, wholly to forget thy fall, and to set thyself to meditate on the unspeakable goodness of God ; how He is beyond measure ready and eager to forgive every sin, how grievous soever it be ; how He calls the sinner by various ways and means to come to Him, that He may unite him to Himself in this life, and by His grace sanctify him, and in the life to come by His glory make him blessed for ever.

And after having quieted thy mind by these or the like reflections, turn thy thoughts once more to thy fault, doing as I have told thee above.

Again, at the time of sacramental confession, which I exhort thee to frequent often, call to mind all thy falls, and with fresh sorrow and displeasure for having offended God, and with purpose to do so no more, open thy griefs with all sincerity to some spiritual adviser.

CHAPTER XXVII.

OF THE MEANS EMPLOYED BY THE
ASSAIL AND DECEIVE THOSE WH
TO GIVE THEMSELVES UP TO H
AND AGAINST THOSE ALREAD'
CAPTIVE IN THE BONDAGE OF SI

THOU must know, beloved, that
is intent upon nothing but our
that he does not use the same plan
with all.

In order, then, to make know
some of his modes of attack, his
wiles, I lay before thee different cor
men.

Some are yet in the bondage of
without any thought of getting thems

Some wish to be free, but do no
try.

Others think they are walking in
of godliness, while they are mov
from it.

And, lastly, some, after having att
high degree of holiness, fall into d
dition.

We will discourse separately of e

CHAPTER XXVIII.

OF THE ASSAULTS AND DEVICES OF THE
DEVIL AGAINST THOSE WHOM HE HOLDS
IN THE BONDAGE OF SIN.

WHEN the devil holds a man in the bondage of sin, his chief concern is to keep from him every thought which might lead him to the knowledge of his most unhappy condition.

And not only does he, by instilling contrary thoughts, drive from him thoughts and inspirations which call him to repentance, but by opportunities, ready and prepared for him, he makes him fall into the same or, it may be, into other and greater sins.

Hence, as his blindness becomes thicker and denser, he throws himself into a more headlong and reckless course of sin; and thus, from blindness to deeper blindness, from sin to fouler sin, his wretched life whirls round even unto death, unless God, by His grace, provide some means of stopping him. The remedy for one in this most unhappy state is to be ready on his part to give heed to every thought and inspiration which calls him from darkness

Satan's Craft to Prevent Conversion.

to light, crying out with all his heart to his Creator, "O Lord, help me, make speed to help me; leave me not any longer in this darkness of sin!" And let him not grow weary of repeating over and over again this cry for mercy in these or like words.

If possible, let him fly instantly to some spiritual adviser, and ask help and counsel that he may be delivered from the power of the enemy.

And if he cannot do this at once, let him fly with all speed to the Crucified, and casting himself at His sacred Feet, with his face to the earth, crave mercy and help.

On doing this without delay, depends the victory, as thou wilt learn in the next chapter.



CHAPTER XXIX.

OF THE ARTS AND WILES BY WHICH THE DEVIL HOLDS IN BONDAGE THOSE WHO, CONSCIOUS OF THEIR MISERY, WOULD FAIN BE FREE; AND HOW IT IS THAT OUR RESOLVES PROVE SO OFTEN FRUITLESS.

THEY who, knowing the evil of their course of life, wish to change it, are often ensnared and conquered by the devil with such weapons as these:

How Resolutions are often Fruitless.

“ Presently, presently.”

“ Cras, cras ” (“ to-morrow, to-morrow ”)
is the raven’s cry.

“ I wish first to consider and despatch this or that business, remove this perplexity, and then give myself with greater quiet to things spiritual.”

A snare this in which many men have been and still are caught. The cause of this is our own negligence and heedlessness, seeing that in a business which concerns the salvation of the soul and the honour of God, we are so slow to take up that most powerful weapon :

“ Now, now ; ” wherefore “ by-and-by ? ”

“ To-day, to-day ; ” wherefore “ to-morrow ? ”
saying to thyself :

“ Supposing even this ‘ by-and-by ’ and this ‘ to-morrow ’ be granted me, is it the path of safety and of victory to seek first to be wounded, and to commit fresh irregularities ? ”

Thou seest then, beloved, that in order to escape this snare, and the one before mentioned, and to subdue the enemy, the remedy is, ready obedience to heavenly thoughts and inspirations.

Ready obedience, I say, and not mere resolves ; for these are often treacherous, and many have thereby remained deceived through various causes.

How Resolutions are often Fruitless.

The first reason is, as referred to above, that our resolves are not based on distrust of self, and trust in God. Our excessive pride, which causes this delusion and blindness, suffers us not to see this.

The light whereby to discover it, and the medicine to cure it, both come from the goodness of God; Who suffers us to fall, that by the fall He may lead us from trust in self to trust in Him alone, and from pride to the knowledge of ourselves.

Therefore if thou wilt that thy resolutions be effectual, they must be firmly made; and they will be so when they have nothing of trust in self, and are all humbly founded upon trust in God.

The other reason is, that when we are making our resolves, we dwell on the beauty and excellence of virtue, and these draw towards them our will, faint and slack as it is; but afterwards, on laying before it the difficulty of attaining virtue, the will being weak and untried, fails, and shrinks from the effort.

Therefore accustom thyself to love the difficulties which accompany the attainment of virtue, more than the virtues themselves, and use these difficulties now in a less, now in a greater degree, to strengthen thy will, if thou wouldest indeed attain to holiness.

How Resolutions are often Fruitless.

And know, that the more generously wilt thou embrace and value these difficulties, the more quickly and firmly thou shalt conquer thyself and thine enemies.

The third reason is, that in our resolves we are prone to aim at our own advantage, rather than at holiness and the will of God. This is often the case with resolves which are wont to be made in times of spiritual joy or heavy sorrow, when we find nothing brings solace except a resolve to will to give ourselves wholly to God, and to the practice of virtue.

That thou mayest not fall into this snare, be, in times of spiritual delight, very cautious and humble in thy resolutions, especially in thy promises and vows; and when in tribulation, let thy resolves be only to bear thy cross patiently, according to the will of God, and even to make it heavier, by refusing whatever could lighten it, whether of earth, or sometimes even of heaven. Let thy one desire, thy one prayer be, that God would help thee to bear all adversity without marring the virtue of patience, and without any failure of love toward thy Lord.



Satan's Decree

CHAPTER XXX.

OF THE DELUSION OF THOSE WHO IMAGINE
THEY ARE GOING ON TO PERFECTION.

THE enemy being now conquered in his first and second attack and device, our malignant foe has recourse to the third, which is, to make us forget the enemies who are in the act of fighting and injuring us, and to fill our mind with aspirations and resolves after some higher degree of perfection.

Hence it follows, that we are continually wounded, yet pay no regard to our wounds, and counting our intentions as carried into effect, we pride ourselves upon them in various ways.

And while we will not endure the least thing or the slightest word which crosses our will we waste our time in long meditations or resolves to bear the sharpest sufferings for the love of God.

And because the weaker nature feels no repugnance to these sufferings, as being far off therefore do we, impostors that we are, persuade ourselves that we are in the rank of those who are indeed patiently enduring great things

To avoid this snare, be resolved to fight

through Theories of Virtue.

against the enemies which are close at hand, and are really warring against thee. Thou wilt thus see clearly whether thy resolves are true or deceptive, weak or strong, and thou wilt go on unto holiness and perfection by the well-beaten and royal road.

But I do not advise thee to take up arms against the enemies who are not now wont to annoy thee, unless thou foresee that they are likely at some time hence to attack thee. In this case it is lawful to make resolves beforehand, that thou mayest be then found ready and strong.

Do not, however, judge of thy resolves by their effects, even though for a long time thou shouldst have duly exercised thyself in virtue ; but be very humble as to them, fearing thyself and thine own weakness ; and trusting in God, turn to Him in frequent prayer that He may strengthen and protect thee from dangers, and especially from the very least presumption and self-confidence.

For, in this case, if we cannot wholly conquer certain little faults, which the Lord sometimes leaves in us, in order to a more humble knowledge of self, and the protection of some other virtue, it is nevertheless lawful for us to form resolutions of attaining to a higher degree of perfection.

CHAPTER XXXI.

OF THE DEVIL'S ASSAULTS AND DEVICES TO
DRAW US AWAY FROM THE PATH OF
PERFECTION.

THE fourth device, by which, as I said before, the evil one assails us, is, when he sees us advancing steadily towards holiness, to excite in us a variety of good desires, that he may lead us from the exercise of virtue into sin.

A sick person, perhaps, is bearing his illness with a patient will. The cunning adversary, knowing that in this way he may gain a habit of patience, immediately lays before him all the good works which, in a different condition, he might be able to do; and tries to persuade him, that if he were well, he would serve God better, and be more useful to himself and others.

Having once aroused within him such thoughts, he goes on increasing them by degrees, till at last he makes him restless at being unable to carry them into effect as he would wish.

And the deeper and stronger such wishes become, the more does this restlessness increase.

Satan's Deceits.

Then the enemy leads him on softly and artfully to impatience under the sickness, not as sickness, but as a hindrance to those works which the sick man anxiously wished to do for some greater good.

When he has brought him so far, with the same cunning he removes from his mind the motive of serving God and do good works, leaving him the bare desire to be freed from his sickness.

Then if this does not happen, he is so disturbed as to become quite impatient. And thus insensibly he falls from the virtue in which he was exercising himself into its opposite vice.

The way to guard against and resist this snare is to be very careful, when in any state of trial, not to give way to desires after any good which, being unable at once to affect, would probably disturb thee.

In such a case, thou shouldest with all humility, patience, and resignation, be convinced that thy wishes would not have the effect thou didst think, inasmuch as thou art more insignificant and unstable than thou thinkest.

Or else believe that God, in His secret judgment, or on account of thy unworthiness, does not intend thee to do this good work, but

Satan's Deceits.

rather that thou abase and humble thyself patiently under the gentle and mighty hand of His Will.

In like manner, if hindered by thy spiritual adviser, or by any other reason, so that thou canst not attend thy devotions, and especially the Holy Communion, as frequently as thou desirest, suffer not thyself to be troubled and disquieted by wishing for them, but, stripped of thy whole self, clothe thyself with the good pleasure of thy Lord, saying to thyself :

“ If the eye of Divine Providence did not perceive ingratitude and sin in me, I should not now be deprived of the blessing of receiving the most Holy Sacrament, but seeing that my Lord thus discovers to me my unworthiness, for ever blessed and praised be His name for this. I trust, O my Lord, that in Thine infinite loving-kindness Thou wilt so order my heart that, ready to do Thy good pleasure in all things, and disposed to ever will of Thine, it may open itself to Thee, so that Thou, entering into it spiritually, mayest comfort and strengthen it against all the enemies who seek to draw it away from Thee. Thus, may all be done as seems good in Thy sight, my Creator and Redeemer ; may Thy Will be now and ever my food and support. *This only favour do I beg of Thee, O my*

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Beloved, that my soul, purified and freed from whatsoever displeases Thee, and adorned with all holiness, may be ever prepared for Thy coming, and for the fulfilment of Thy Will, whatsoever it may be."

If thou wilt observe these instructions, know assuredly that when hindered in any good which thou hast a desire to do, whether this hindrance come from nature or from the devil, to disquiet thee and turn thee aside from the way of godliness, or from God, for trial of thy submission to His Will, thou wilt always find an opportunity of pleasing thy Lord in the way most acceptable to Him. This is true devotion, and the service which God requires of us.

I caution thee further, lest thou grow impatient under trials, from whatsoever source proceeding, that in using the lawful means which God's servants are wont to use, thou use them not simply with the desire and hope to obtain relief, but because it is the Will of God that they be used; for we know not whether the Divine Majesty will be pleased by this means to deliver us from our troubles.

If thou dost otherwise, thou wilt fall into further evils; for should the thing not turn out according to thy purpose or desires, thou wilt easily grow impatient, or thy patience

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will be defective, not wholly pleasing to God, and of little worth.

Lastly, I would here warn thee of a secret deceit of our self-love, which is wont, on certain occasions, to excuse and justify our faults.

For example, a sick man who has but little patience under his sickness, conceals his impatience under the cloke of zeal for some seeming good, saying that his vexation comes not really from impatience under the suffering caused by his illness, but is a reasonable sorrow, because he has brought it on himself, or else because others, who wait on him, are enduring weariness and injury.

In like manner the ambitious man, who frets himself because he has failed to gain some honour, does not attribute this to his own pride and vanity, but to other causes, whereas he knows very well that, on other occasions when they would cause himself no discomfort, they would give him no concern. So neither would the sick man care if they, whose trouble and fatigue on his account seem to give him so much vexation, should have the same trouble and hurt on account of another's sickness. A clear proof that the root of such men's sorrow is not for others, or for aught else but a dislike of all that crosses their own will.

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Therefore, lest thou fall into this and other errors, always bear patiently, as I have told thee, every trouble and sorrow, from whatever cause it may spring.



CHAPTER XXXII.

OF THE LAST ASSAULT AND DEVICE TREATED,
BY WHICH THE DEVIL TRIES TO MAKE
VIRTUES ALREADY ACQUIRED, THE OC-
CASION OF OUR RUIN.

THE cunning and malignant serpent fails not to tempt us by his artifice, even through the very virtues to which we have attained, that they may become an occasion of ruin to us, by inducing us to think too much of them and of ourselves, and thereby to fall afterward into the sin of pride and vain-glory.

To keep thyself from this danger, ever be ready to do battle, placing thyself in a safe and level field of a true and deep knowledge that thou art nothing, that thou knowest nothing, that thou canst do nothing, and hast nothing but miseries and defects, and deservest nothing but *eternal* damnation.

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And thus secured and entrenched within the bounds of this truth, suffer not thyself to be drawn aside so much as a hair's breath, either by any thought, or ought else which may befall thee, well convinced that all these are so many enemies, who would slay or wound thee shouldst thou fall into their hands.

That thou mayest exercise thee well in the aforesaid field of knowledge of thy own nothingness, use the following rule :

As often as thou dost reflect upon thyself and thy works, ever reflect upon what thou art and thyself, and not upon what is of God and of His grace ; and so esteem thyself, as thou dost find thyself to be with what is thine own only. If thou think of the time before thou wert thou wilt see that in all that abyss of eternity thou wast a mere nothing, and didst nothing and couldest in no way assist in thy own creation.

And now that thou hast thy being through the sole goodness of God, if thou leave to Him His own, His continual Providence whereby He every moment sustains thee, what art thou with all which is thine own but still a mere nothing ?

For there is no doubt that, were He for the smallest moment to withdraw from thee, thou wouldst return in a moment to thy original

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nothingness, whence His Almighty Hand drew thee.

It is clear then that in this natural being, thou, viewed with all which is thine own, hast no reason to think highly of thyself, or for wishing to be thought highly of by others.

As to the life of grace, and the practice of good works, what good and meritorious thing could thou do of thine own natural strength, if deprived of the help of God?

For calling to mind on the other hand the number of thy past transgressions, and moreover the multitude of other sins from which God's pitiful Hand has alone withheld thee, thou wilt find that thine iniquities, by reckoning up not only of days and years, but also acts and habits of sin (for one evil habit draws another after it) would have become almost innumerable, and so made of thee another infernal Lucifer.

Hence, if thou wouldest not rob God of His glory, but cleave faithfully to thy Lord, thou must learn day by day to think more humbly of thyself.

And be very careful in this judgment to deal honestly with thyself, or it may do thee no little harm.

For if thou, in that thou knowest thine own iniquity, art better off than one who, in his blindness, *thinks himself* to be something

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yet thou lovest much, and makest thyself worse than he in the motives of the heart, if thou desire to be esteemed and pass for what thou knowest thyself not to be.

If then thou desirest that this knowledge of thy sinfulness and vileness should protect thee from thine enemies, and make thee dear to God, thou must not only despise thyself, as unworthy of all good, and deserving of all evil, but thou must love to be despised by others, detesting compliments, rejoicing in shame, and stooping on every possible occasion to offices which other men hold in contempt.

Make no account at all of the opinion which others may form of you lest it deter thee from this holy exercise. Be sure, however, that thou do this simply with a view to thine own humiliation and self-discipline, and not out of certain lurking pride and presumptuous spirit which oftentimes, under some specious pretext, causes us to disregard the opinion of others.

And if, because of any good which God has bestowed on thee, thou shouldst perchance be esteemed, or loved, or praised by others, keep steadily collected within thyself, nor be drawn aside one step from that which is true and just, but turn first to God, saying to Him with all thine heart :

“O Lord, may I never take to myself Th

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glory and grace ; to Thee be praise, and honour, and glory, to me confusion of face ;" and then say, in thine heart, as if addressing him who praises thee, "Whence is it that he accounts me good, when in reality my God alone and His works 'are good'?"

For by acting in this manner, and by giving back to the Lord that which is His own, thou wilt put to flight thine enemies, and fit thyself to receive greater gifts and favours from God.

And if the remembrance of some good works tempt thee to vanity, view them instantly not as thine own but as God's works, and, as if addressing them, say in thine heart : "I know not how ye had your source and birth in my mind, for ye have not your being from me ; but the good God, and His grace, created, nourished, and preserved you. Him alone then will I acknowledge as your true and first Father, Him will I thank, and to Him will I give all the praise."

Consider, next, that not only do all the works which thou hast done, fall short of the light and grace which has been given thee to know them and to execute them, but also that they are exceedingly imperfect, and greatly lack that pure intention, due diligence and fervour, with which they should be done, and which should ever accompany them.

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If then thou wilt look at them in this light, thou wilt see reason rather for shame, than for vain complacency, because it is but too true that the graces which we receive pure and perfect from God are sullied in their use by our imperfections.

Further, compare thy works with those of the saints, and other servants of God ; for by such comparison thou wilt clearly see that thy best and greatest are of base alloy, and of little worth.

Next, measure them by those which Christ wrought for thee in the mysteries of His life and of His continual cross ; consider His works apart from His Divine Person in themselves alone, how fervent and how pure was the love with which they were wrought, and thou wilt clearly see that all thy works are indeed as nothing.

And lastly, if thou wilt raise thy thoughts the Divinity and the boundless Majesty thy God, and the service which He deserves thou wilt see plainly, that cause not for vanity but for great fear, remains with thee from thy works. Therefore, in all thy ways, in thy works, however holy they be, thou cry unto thy Lord with all thine heart, say "God be merciful to me a sinner."

Further, I would advise thee to be reser

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in speaking of the gifts which God may have bestowed on thee ; for this is almost always displeasing to thy Lord, as He Himself plainly shows us in the following lesson :

He appeared once, so the story runs, in the form of a little child to one of His pure and devoted creatures, who asked Him with much simplicity to recite the Angelical Salutation. He readily began : " Hail, Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee, blessed art thou among women," and then stopped, being unwilling to praise Himself, in the words which follow. And while she was urging Him to proceed, He withdrew Himself from her, leaving His servant full of consolation, because of the heavenly doctrine which, by His example, He had thus revealed to her.

Do thou likewise, beloved, learn to humble thyself, acknowledging thyself with all thy works to be the very nothing that thou art.

This is the foundation of all other virtues. God, before we existed, created us out of nothing ; and now that through Him we have a being, He wills that the whole spiritual fabric should be based on this foundation ; namely, the knowledge that of ourselves we are nothing. And the deeper we advance in this knowledge, the loftier will be the building. And in proportion as we dig up the earth of our wretched-

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ness, so will be the number of solid stones which the Divine Architect will lay to advance the building.

And do not persuade thyself, beloved, that thou canst ever dig deep enough; on the contrary, believe this of thyself; that if any thing belonging to a creature could be infinite, it would be thy vileness.

With this knowledge, if duly practised, we possess all good; without it, we are little better than nothing, though we do the works of all the saints, and are continually absorbed in God.

O blessed knowledge, which makes us happy on earth and glorious in heaven! O light, which, issuing from darkness, makes the soul bright and clear! O unspeakable joy, which sparkles amid our impurities! O nothingness, which, when known, makes us lords of all!

I should never be weary of telling this to thee; if thou wilt praise God, accuse thyself, and desire to be reproached by others. Humble thyself with all, bend beneath all, if thou wouldest exalt Him in thee, and thyself in Him. Wouldest thou find Him, exalt not thyself, or He will fly from thee. Abase thyself to the utmost, and He will seek thee and embrace thee. And He will receive thee and embrace thee the more lovingly and tenderly, the more thou abasest thyself in

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thine own sight, and the more thou art content to be esteemed vile by others, and to be spurned as a thing abominable. Account thyself unworthy of this so great a gift, vouchsafed to thee by thy God, Who suffered shame for thee, in order to unite Himself to thee. Fail not to render Him continual thanks for it, and hold thyself obliged to those who have given thee occasion to humble thyself, and still more to those who have trampled upon thee, and who think, moreover, that thou endurest it with an ill, not with a good grace. Even were this so, yet shouldst thou show no sign of it outwardly. If, notwithstanding these many considerations, which are but too true—the subtlety of the devil, and our own ignorance and evil inclinations, should so prevail within us that thoughts of self-exaltation cease not to disquiet us, and make an impression on our hearts, then is the time to humble ourselves the more in our own eyes; for we see by this proof that we have advanced but little in the spiritual life, and in the true knowledge of self, seeing that we cannot free ourselves from those annoyances which spring from the root of our empty pride. So from the poison we shall extract honey, and from our wounds their own cure.



CHAPTER XXXIII.

SOME ADVICE HOW TO CONQUER EVIL PASSIONS AND ACQUIRE NEW VIRTUES.

THOUGH I have said so much to thee of the way by which thou must conquer self, and adorn thyself with virtues, there still remain other points whereof to warn thee.

First. In thine endeavours after holiness, never be persuaded to use those spiritual exercises which appoint different virtues for different days of the week.

But let the order of thy warfare and of thine exercise be to combat those passions which have always injured thee, and which still often assault and injure thee, and to adorn thyself with their opposite virtues as perfectly as possible.

For, in acquiring these virtues, thou wilt have no difficulty in gaining all others as their occasions offer ; and occasions will never be wanting, inasmuch as all the virtues are so interlinked one with another, that he who possesses one in perfection, has all the others

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ready waiting, as it were, at the door of his heart.

Secondly. Never set a fixed time for the attainment of virtues, nor say that you will gain them in so many days, weeks, or years ; but as one newly-born, as a soldier yet untried, fight thy way, and push forward to the summit of perfection.

Do not stand still, even for a moment ; for to stand still in the way of holiness and perfection, is not to take breath or courage, but to relapse or become weaker than before.

By standing still, I mean, making ourselves believe that we have gained the virtue perfectly, and at times taking less heed of the occasions which may call to new acts of that virtue, or of little failings therein.

Therefore be careful, fervent, vigilant, so as not to miss the slightest opportunity for the exercise of any virtue.

Embrace every occasion which may lead to it, and especially those which are most difficult, seeing that habits are more quickly formed, and more deeply rooted, the greater the difficulties to be overcome ; therefore love those which offer thee such difficulties.

Flee those only, and that with rapid step, with all speed and diligence, which may lead thee to the temptations of the flesh.

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Thirdly. Be prudent and discreet in those virtues which may do injury to the body, such as self-chastisement by means of disciplines hair-cloths, fasts and vigils, meditations, and the like; for these must be attained slowly and by degrees, as will be presently explained.

As to other virtues wholly internal, such as the love of God, contempt of the world, self-abasement, hatred of sin and of sinful passions meekness and patience, love towards all men even for those who injure us, and such like it is not necessary to attain these little by little nor to mount by degrees to perfection in them but strive to make each act as perfect as possible.

Fourthly. Let thy whole thought, thy desire thy heart, think of nothing, desire nothing long for nothing, but to conquer that passion with which thou art struggling, and to form it opposite virtue. Be this all thy world, thy heaven, thy earth, thine every treasure; and all in order to please God.

Whether eating or fasting, labouring or resting, watching or sleeping, at home or abroad, whether engaged in devotion or in the works of thy hands, do all with a view to overcome and subdue this passion, and to gain the opposite virtue.

Fifthly. Be thou the foe of all earthly

On the Order of our Warfare.

pleasures and comforts, and so will all vices have little power to assail thee, for they all spring from the one root of pleasure. Therefore when this is cut away by hatred of self, they lose their strength and power.

For if on the one hand thou wilt fight against some particular sin or pleasure, and on the other give thyself to some earthly enjoyment (though it be only venial), hard will be the battle, and bloody, and rare, and uncertain the victory. Therefore keep ever in mind these Divine words :

“ He that loveth his life shall lose it ; and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal.”

“ Brethren, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live after the flesh. For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die : but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live.”

Sixthly and lastly. I warn thee, that it would be well and perhaps necessary for thee to make first, a general examination and confession, doing everything which belongs to that duty, that thou mayest be better assured of thy Lord's favour, to Whom alone we must look for all graces and victories.



CHAPTER XXXIV.

WHAT VIRTUES ARE TO BE ACQUIRED BY DEGREES, BY EXERCISING OURSELVES IN THEIR GRADUAL FORMATION, AND GIVING OUR ATTENTION FIRST TO ONE, AND THEN TO ANOTHER.

THOUGH the true soldier of Christ, who aspires to height of perfection, should assign no limits to his progress, still there are some degrees of spiritual fervour which require to be bridled with a certain discretion, lest, being at first embraced with too much warmth, they should be soon exhausted, and fail us in the midst of our race. Hence, besides what has been said as to moderation in outward exercises, it is well to know, that even inward virtues should be attained by degrees, and little by little; for thus that which is small soon becomes great and abiding. For example, we should not, as a rule, practise ourselves in rejoicing in afflictions and wishing for them, till we had first passed the lower degrees of the virtue of patience.

Neither do I advise thee to attend mainly to or to many virtues at once, but to one

Of Attaining Virtues.

only, and afterwards to the others ; thus will the virtuous habit be more easily and firmly rooted in the soul. For by the constant exercise of one single virtue, the memory recurs to it more readily on all occasions, the intellect becomes continually more sharpened to discern new ways and motives for attaining to it, and the will inclines to follow it more easily and pleasurable than if occupied with many virtues at one and the same time.

And by means of this uniform exercise, the acts which bear upon a single virtue are done with the less fatigue, through the likeness between them. The performance of one act facilitates the performance of the next, and by this common likeness again they make a greater impression upon us ; the ground of the heart being prepared and disposed for receiving the new seed, by having already afforded room for similar acts.

These reasons have the greater force, as we know for certain, that whoever exercises himself well in one virtue, learns at the same time the way to exercise himself in another, and thus all grow together with the increase of one, because they are inseparably joined together, as being rays proceeding from one and the same Divine Light.



Of Attaining Virtues.

CHAPTER XXXV.

OF THE MEANS WHEREBY VIRTUES ARE ACQUIRED, AND HOW WE SHOULD USE THEM, BY ALLOWING SOME SPACE OF TIME TO ONE VIRTUE ONLY.

FOR the attainment of holiness, besides all that has been said above, we need a great and generous soul; a will, neither unstable nor remiss, but strong and resolute, with a firm conviction that we must pass through many rough and adverse trials.

Besides this, there are particular inclinations and affections which we may acquire, by often considering how pleasing they are to God, how excellent and noble in themselves, and how useful and necessary to us, since from them all perfection has its source and end.

Let there be made, each morning, firm resolves to exercise ourselves in them according to the events which are likely to happen through the day, during which we should many times examine ourselves to see whether we have kept these resolves or not, renewing them afterwards with fresh life. And this should be done especially concerning the par-

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particular virtue we are then endeavouring to acquire.

Likewise, let the examples of the saints, and our prayers and meditations on the Life and Passion of Christ (so necessary in every spiritual exercise), be all applied chiefly to that very virtue in which we are then exercising ourselves.

Let the same be done on all occasions (as we shall presently shew more particularly), however different they may be one from the other.

Let us try so to use ourselves to inward and outward acts of virtue, that we may come to perform them with the same readiness and ease, as before we did others pleasing to our natural will. And (as we said elsewhere) the more contrary such acts are to that will, the more quickly will they bring the good habit into our soul.

The sacred words of Holy Scripture, uttered by the voice, or at least mentally, as may best suit the occasion, have a wonderful power to help us in this exercise. To this end let there be many such words in readiness, concerning the virtue we are to practise, and let them be said through the day, especially when the contrary passion asserts itself. As for instance, if we are trying to get patience, we can use the following words, or others like them.

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“My children, suffer patiently the wrath that is come upon you from God.” (Baruch iv. 25)

“The patient abiding of the meek shall not perish for ever.” (Psalm ix. 18.)

“He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty; and he that ruleth his spirit than he that taketh a city.” (Proverbs xvi. 32.)

“In your patience possess ye your souls” (Luke xxi. 19.)

“Let us run with patience the race that is set before us.” (Hebrews xii. 1.)

To the same end we may likewise say the following, or such like short prayers:

“When, my God, shall this heart of mine be armed with the shield of patience?”

“When shall I, to please my Lord, be every trouble with a quiet mind?”

“Oh, most dear sufferings, which liken me unto my Lord Jesus crucified for me!”

“Sole Life of my soul! shall I ever, for Thy glory, live contented amidst a thousand agonies?”

“Happy shall I be, if, in the midst of the fire of tribulation, I burn with desire to endure greater things!”

We may use these short prayers, and all others, suited to our progress in holiness, which will cherish the spirit of devotion.

These short prayers are called ejaculatory

Obey Press Forwards.

because they are shot like darts or arrows towards heaven. They have great power to rouse us to virtue, and to penetrate even to the heart of God, if, as by two wings, they be accompanied by two things.

The one is, a true knowledge that our spiritual exercise is pleasing to our God.

The other, a true and burning desire to acquire holiness for this end only, to please His Divine majesty.



CHAPTER XXXVI.

THAT IN THE EXERCISE OF VIRTUE WE MUST
WALK IN CONTINUAL WATCHFULNESS.

OF the things most important and necessary to attain holiness, besides those already taught, one is, that to arrive at each virtue which we set before us, we must ever be going onwards; else, by only standing still, we are turning back.

For as soon as we leave off acts of virtue, it follows of necessity that through the violent inclination of the sensual appetite and of other things which move us to outward actions, many unruly passions are formed within us,

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which destroy, or at least impair holiness; and, moreover, we lose many gifts and graces with which our Lord might have rewarded our farther progress. Therefore is the spiritual journey different from that of the earthly traveller; for in the earthly journey, nothing of the ground already gained is lost by standing still; but it is otherwise in the heavenly journey.

There is another great difference too in that the weariness of the earthly pilgrim increases as the body moves on, whereas in the spiritual journey, the farther the traveller walks onwards, the more vigour and strength he gains.

For by the practice of virtue, the lower nature, which by resisting made the way rough and wearisome, gets weaker and weaker; while the superior part, where virtue abides, gets firmer and more robust.

Hence, as we advance in holiness, the pain which we felt lessens, and a certain secret gladness, which by the working of the Spirit is mingled with that pain, increases ever more and more. In this way, ever going on with greater ease and delight, from one virtue to another, we reach at last the mountain top, where the perfected soul works on without weariness, nay, with pleasure and rejoicing, because having now conquered and subdued

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its unruly passions, and standing above all created things and above itself, it lives happily in the heart of the Most High, and there, sweetly labouring, finds its repose.



CHAPTER XXXVII.

THAT AS WE MUST ALWAYS CONTINUE IN THE EXERCISE OF ALL VIRTUES, SO WE MUST NOT SHUN ANY OPPORTUNITY WHICH OFFERS FOR THEIR ACQUISITION.

WE have seen clearly enough, that in the journey which leads to perfection, we must ever press on without stopping.

To this end we should be very careful and watchful, not to lose any opportunity for the increase of any virtue. Therefore they are much mistaken who remove themselves, as much as possible, from such contrary things as might lead to it.

For (keeping to my wonted example) if thou wouldest gain the habit of patience, it is not well to keep away from such persons, deeds, or thoughts, as try thy patience.

Therefore thou needest not shun the society

Of Shunning Opportunities.

of any because it is tiresome to thee ; but in thine intercourse and dealings with whatever annoys thee, keep thy will always disposed and ready to bear any trouble and vexation which may come of it ; else thou wilt never get the habit of patience.

In like manner, if any work be irksome to thee, either on its own account, or because of the person who laid it on thee, or because it hinders thee from doing something thou wouldest like better, still undertake it and go on with it, whatever trouble it be to thee, and though thou mightest find comfort by not doing it ; because thou wouldest not in this way learn to suffer, nor would thy peace be true peace, as it comes not from a soul freed from passion, and adorned with holiness.

I would say the same of harassing thoughts, which at times may trouble and disturb thy mind. Thou needest not drive them entirely away from thee, for besides the pain they give thee, they also teach thee to bear contradictions.

And whoever tells thee differently, would teach thee rather to shun pain, than to follow after the virtue which thou desirest.

It is very true that the young soldier especially ought to skirmish and shield himself with watchfulness and skill on such

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occasions, now facing the enemy, now retiring, as he gains more or less spiritual strength.

So we must never quite turn back and withdraw, so as to leave all opportunity of contradiction behind ; because, though for the time we might be saved from the danger of falling, we should for the future run a greater risk when exposed to assaults of impatience, from not having first armed and strengthened ourselves with the practice of the contrary virtue.

This advice, however, applies not to the sins of the flesh, of which we have already spoken more particularly.



CHAPTER XXXVIII.

THAT WE SHOULD PROPERLY VALUE ALL OPPORTUNITIES OF FIGHTING FOR THE ACQUISITION OF VIRTUES ; AND CHIEFLY THOSE WHICH PRESENT THE GREATEST DIFFICULTIES.

IT is not enough, beloved, that thou shouldst use the opportunities given thee of acquiring virtue ; I would have thee at times seek them, as things of great price and value, and *always embrace them joyfully, so soon as they*

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appear ; counting those most dear and precious which are most distasteful to thy nature.

This, by the grace of God, thou wilt do, if thou wilt fix in thy mind the following considerations.

One is, that opportunities are the fitting, nay, the necessary means of acquiring virtues. Hence when thou art asking virtues of the Lord, thou art also of necessity asking for opportunities, else would thy prayer be vain, and thou wouldest be contradicting thyself, and tempting God ; who does not usually give patience without tribulation, nor humility without humiliations.

And the same may be said of all the other virtues, which are doubtless gained by means of crosses. And the more painful these crosses are, the more they help us, and therefore the more dear and welcome should they be to us. For acts of virtue, done at such times, are more noble and generous, and open the path to holiness more easily and quickly.

Even the slightest opportunity, though but a word or a look, which crosses our will, should be prized and used, for acts so made are more frequent, though less intense, than those made in great difficulties.

The other consideration (of which I have already spoken) is, that every thing which

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befals us comes from God for our good, and in order that we may profit by it.

And though (as we have said elsewhere) some of these, such as our own failings, or those of others, cannot be said to be *of* God, Who willeth not sin, yet are they *from* Him, in that He permits them, and though able to hinder them, does not do so. But all the sorrows and afflictions which come to us, either through our own fault, or the malice of others, are both from God, and of God; because He allows them; and that which He would not have us *do*, as being full of evil, and exceeding abominable in His pure eyes, He wills that we *suffer*, both for our good and for other wise reasons hidden from us.

Being then well assured that our Lord wills us to bear gladly any cross which may come to us, either from others or from our own evil deeds,—to excuse our impatience, by saying (as many do) that God wills not, nay, abhors evil deeds, is but a vain pretext for hiding our own faults, and refusing the cross, which we know it is His pleasure we should bear.

Nay, I will say farther, that all things considered, our Lord loves better to see in us patience under those troubles, which come from the wickedness of men, especially from those whom we have served and benefited,

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than under those which arise from other grievous causes. And this because our proud nature is, mostly, more humbled by the former than by the latter, and also, because by suffering them with good will, we do above measure please and magnify our God, working together with Him in that wherein His unspeakable goodness and omnipotence are most conspicuous; namely, his drawing out of the deadly poison of malice and wickedness the sweet and precious fruit of holiness and virtue.

Know then, beloved, that so soon as the Lord beholds in us a lively desire to do it in earnest, and give ourselves as we ought to so great a work, He makes ready a cup of the strongest temptations and hardest trials, that we may take it in His time; and we, acknowledging His love, and our own good, should receive it blindly and cheerfully, and drink it trustingly and readily, to the very dregs; for it is a medicine prepared by an unerring Hand, and made up of ingredients the more healthful to the soul, as they are more bitter in themselves.



CHAPTER XXXIX.

HOW TO AVAIL OURSELVES OF THE VARIOUS OPPORTUNITIES FOR THE EXERCISE OF A SINGLE VIRTUE.

WE have seen above, that it is better to practise a single virtue at a time than many at once; and that we should use the opportunities we meet with to this end, however varied. Now learn how this may be done with tolerable facility.

It may happen that the same day, or at the very hour we are reproved for some good action, or blamed for some other reason, we may be harshly denied some favour we have asked, or, perhaps, some mere trifle; we may be unjustly suspected of evil, or we may be called to endure some bodily pain, or some petty annoyance (such as a dish badly dressed); or some heavier and harder trial, such as this wretched life is full of, may befall us.

Though in the variety of these, or the like accidents, we may perform various acts of virtue, yet if we would keep to the rule laid down, we must continue to exercise ourselves in acts wholly conformable to the virtue we have in hand at the time; as, for example:

Of the Exercise of Virtue.

If when these opportunities present themselves, we are exercising ourselves in patience, we shall bear them all willingly and with gladness of heart.

If our exercise be that of humility, we must in all these little troubles acknowledge that we deserve them.

If it is obedience, we shall promptly submit ourselves to the Almighty Hand of God, and, to please Him, (since so He wills it) to created things, rational and even inanimate, that may have caused us these annoyances.

If it is poverty, we shall be well content to be stripped and deprived of all worldly consolation great or small.

If it is charity, we must bring forth acts of love, both towards our neighbour, as the instrument of progress to us, and towards our Lord God, as the first and loving Cause, whence proceed these discomforts, or by Whom they are permitted to arise, for our exercise and spiritual improvement.

What has been said of the various accidents which may befall us every day is equally true of a single trial of long continuance, such as sickness, or other like affliction—we may yet go on performing acts of that virtue, in which we are then exercising ourselves.

CHAPTER XL.

OF THE TIME TO BE GIVEN TO THE EXERCISE OF EACH PARTICULAR VIRTUE, AND OF THE SIGNS OF PROGRESS.

THE time to be bestowed on the exercise of each several virtue is not for me to determine. This must be regulated by the state and needs of each person, by the progress they are making in their spiritual course, and by the judgment of their spiritual guide.

But if we set ourselves earnestly to work in the manner I have described, there is no doubt but that in a few weeks' time we shall have made considerable progress.

It is a sign of progress in holiness, if amid dryness of spirit, and darkness, and anguish of soul, and the withdrawal of spiritual joys, we persevere firmly in our exercises of virtue.

Another clear sign of growth will be, the degree of resistance made by our sensual nature to the performance of acts of virtue; for the weaker this resistance, the greater our advancement. When, then, we cease to feel any contradiction and rebellion in the lower and sensual part, and especially in cases of

Of Spiritual Advancement.

sudden and unexpected assaults, we may look upon this as a token of having already attained to the virtue.

And the greater the alacrity and gladness of spirit which accompanies these acts, the greater profit may we hope to have derived from this exercise.

Beware, however, not to assume as a certainty that we have attained to any virtue, or entirely subdued any one passion, even though for a long time, and after many struggles, we may not have felt its motions within us. For here also the artifices and workings of Satan, and our own deceitful nature, may find a place; since oftentimes that which is vice seems to our lurking pride like virtue. Besides, if we look to the perfection to which God invites us, we shall hardly persuade ourselves (however great the progress we have made in the way of holiness) that we have even entered upon its threshold.

Therefore as a young soldier, and, as it were, a new-born babe in the struggle, do thou return continually to thy first exercises, as though thou hadst hitherto done nothing.

And remember, beloved, to attend rather to advancement in holiness than to a nice examination of thy progress; for the Lord God *the true* and only searcher of our hearts, give

Of Growth in Holiness.

edge to some, and withholds it from
ording as He sees that it will lead
r to humiliation ; and, like a loving
e removes a danger from one, while
He offers an opportunity of increas-
iness. Therefore, though the soul
ot her own progress, let her still
ese her exercises, for she shall see
pleases the Lord to shew it to her
ater good.



CHAPTER XLI.

MUST NOT YIELD TO THE WISH OF
RID OF TRIALS WE ARE BEARING
TLY ; AND HOW TO REGULATE ALL
ESIRES, SO AS TO ADVANCE IN
ESS.

N thou findest thyself in any trial,
never painful, and bearest it with a
rit, take heed lest the devil, or thine
ove, persuade thee to wish to be
rom it ; for thereby two great evils
ll thee.

hat if this wish did not at once rob

Of Growth in Holiness.

thee of the virtue of patience, it would at least gradually dispose thee to impatience.

The other, that thy patience would become defective, and would be recompensed by God only according to the length of time it was exercised : whereas, if thou hadst not desired to be freed from it, but hadst given thyself unreservedly to His divine goodness, though suffering, though but of an hour's length, nay even less, would have been owned by thy Lord as a long-enduring service.

In this then, and in all things, make it universal rule, to keep thy wishes so far removed from every other object, that they may aim simply and solely at its true and only end that is, the will of God. For in this way will they be well ordered and righteous ; and though however contrary events may be, wilt be not only calm, but contented ; for, as nothing can happen without the supreme will, thou, willing the same, wilt come, at all times, both to will and to have, all that happens and all thou that desirest.

This (which must not be understood either of our own or others' sins, because these God wills not) applies to every chastisement arising from these or other causes, though it be severe and searching as to reach the bottom of the heart, and to wither up the roots of

Moderation in Outward Exercises.

ral life; for this is the very cross with which it pleases God to favour sometimes His rest and dearest friends.

And what I say of the endurance which thou hast have in all cases, is to be understood also that portion of any trouble which yet remains, and which God wills us to bear, even if we have used all lawful means to be freed from it.

And even these means should be ruled by the disposal and will of God, who has ordained them to be used, not to please ourselves, but because He so wills it; nor as if we long or desiring relief from trials, beyond what His service and will require.



CHAPTER XLII.

HOW TO RESIST THE DEVIL, WHEN HE SEEKS TO DECEIVE US BY INDISCREET ZEAL.

WHEN the devil, wily as he is, perceives that we are walking straight forward in the path of holiness with fervent and well-ordered desires, being unable to draw us aside *open allurements*, he transforms himself

Moderation in Outward Exercises.

into an angel of light, and by friendly suggestions, quotations from Scripture, and examples of the saints, importunately urges us to walk indiscreetly in the height of perfection, that so he may cause us thence to fall headlong. To this end he encourages us to chastise the body with great severity, by disciplines, abstinences, hair-cloths, and other like mortifications, that he may either tempt us to pride, by thinking we are doing great things (as is especially the case with women), or that we may, by some sickness, be unfitted for good works, or else that, from over-weariness and pain, spiritual exercises may become wearisome and distasteful to us; and thus, by little and little, we grow lukewarm in godliness, and at last give ourselves up with greater avidity than before to worldly pleasures and amusements. This has been the end of many, who following presumptuously the impulse of an indiscreet zeal, have in their excessive outward austerities, gone beyond the measure of their own virtue, and so have perished in their own inventions, and become the sport of malicious fiends. This would not have befallen them, had they well considered what we have been saying, and remembered that this kind of painful acts, though praiseworthy, and profitable to those who have corresponding strength of body and

eration in Outward Exercises.

of spirit, must yet be regulated by
his constitution and condition.
those who cannot imitate the saints in
the course of life, there will not be wanting
opportunities of imitating their life, by
the most effectual desires and fervent prayers,
to obtain the most glorious crowns of Christ's
rewards by giving themselves up to silence
and solitude, by meekness and humility towards
all men, by patient suffering under ills, by
being obedient to those most obnoxious to them,
and keeping themselves from every fault,
and trifling, for this is a thing more
valuable to God than painful bodily exer-
cise with regard to these. I advise thee to
be discreetly sparing, so as to be able,
rather, to increase them, than by certain
to run the risk of being compelled to
leave them up altogether. I say this,
I am persuaded that thou art not likely
to fall into the error of some, who, though
they are spiritual persons, are yet allured
and seduced, by deceitful nature, into an over-
zeal for the preservation of their bodily
health. So jealous and careful are they of it,
that the most trifling reason, they are
in doubt and in fear of losing it. There
is more of which they think more, and
they are more willingly, than of the ordering of

Moderation in Outward Exercises.

their lives in this respect. Hence they are ever careful to have food suited rather to their taste than to their stomach, which is often enfeebled by over-delicacy. And whereas this is done under the plea of being able to serve God better, it is but a vain attempt to unite two deadly foes, the spirit and the flesh, an attempt which benefits neither, nay, injures both; for this same over-carefulness impairs the health of the one, and the devotion of the other.

Therefore a certain degree of liberty in our way of life is, in all respects, safer and more profitable; not unaccompanied, however, by the discretion of which I have spoken, having regard to different constitutions and conditions of life, which cannot all be subjected to the same rule.

I would say further that not only in outward things, but also in the pursuit of inward holiness, we should proceed with some moderation, as has been shown above as to the gradual acquiring of virtues.



CHAPTER XLIII.

OF THE POWER OF OUR EVIL INCLINATIONS,
AND THE WAY THE DEVIL TEMPTS US TO
FORM RASH JUDGMENTS OF OUR NEIGH-
BOUR ; AND HOW TO RESIST HIM.

FROM the above-mentioned vice of self-esteem and self-conceit arises another, which is in the highest degree hurtful to us, namely, rash judgment of our neighbour, which leads us to despise, disparage, and lower him. And as this fault springs from pride and evil inclination, so is it by the same pride willingly cherished and nourished, for, as it increases, so does pride also increase, insensibly humouring and deceiving us. Since the more we presume to exalt ourselves, so much the more do we unconsciously depreciate others, fancying ourselves free from those imperfections, which we believe we discover in them.

And the wily Devil, who perceives in us this most evil disposition, is constantly on the watch to open our eyes and make us ready enough to see, examine, and exaggerate the failings of others.

Not to Judge Harshly.

The careless do not know or believe, how busy and diligent he is in impressing on our minds the little defects of this or that person, when he cannot prevail on us to notice great faults.

Seeing then that he is so on the watch to do thee hurt, be thou also awake, lest thou fall into his trap. And as soon as he brings before thee any failing of thy neighbour, reject the thought at once, and if thou still feel tempted to pass judgment upon it, yield not. Consider that this power has not been given thee ; and that, even if it had been, thou wouldest be unable to form a right judgment, beset as thou art by a thousand passions, and but too much disposed to think evil of another without just cause.

But as an effectual remedy against this temptation, I would remind thee to occupy thy thoughts with the defects of thine own heart ; for thou wilt hourly perceive more and more that thou hast so much to do and work, in thyself and for thyself, as to have neither time nor inclination to attend to the deeds of others.

Besides, by performing this exercise faithfully, thou wilt be enabled to cleanse thine inward sight more and more from the bad humours whence proceeds this pestilent vice.

Not to Judge Harshly.

And know, that when thou thinkest uncharitably any evil of thy brother, some root of that same evil is in thine own heart, which, in proportion as it is ill-disposed, readily sees in another that which is akin to itself.

Therefore, whenever it comes into thy mind to judge others for some fault, be indignant against thyself, as guilty of the same, and say in thine heart, "How is it that I, wretched being, buried in this and far heavier faults, dare to lift up my head to see and judge the faults of others?"

And thus the weapons which, directed against others, would have wounded thee, being used against thyself, will bring healing to thy wounds.

For if the error committed be palpable, excuse it with a feeling of pity, and believe that there are in thy brother some hidden virtues, to guard which the Lord permits him to fall, or this error to cling to him awhile, that he may be more vile in his own sight, and by being also despised by others for it, he may learn humility, and make himself more acceptable to God, and so his gain become greater than his loss.

And if the sin be not only unmistakable, but grievous and out of an obstinate heart, *turn thy thoughts upon God's awful judgments.*

On Prayer.

Here thou wilt see that men who were once most wicked have attained to high degrees of holiness, and others who seemed to have attained the highest state of perfection, have fallen into the most miserable perdition.

Therefore stand always in fear and trembling for thyself more than for any other.

And be very sure that all good and kindly feeling towards thy neighbour is the gift of the Holy Spirit ; and all contempt, rash judgment, and bitterness towards him, comes from our own evil, and from the suggestions of Satan.

If then any failings in another have made an impression on thee, rest not, give no sleep to thine eyes, until to the utmost of thy power thou have effaced it from thy heart.



CHAPTER XLIV.

ON PRAYER.

IF distrust of self, trust in God, and spiritual exercises, are as needful in this combat as has been shown above, needful above all is prayer (the fourth weapon before mentioned), by means of which we may obtain not only

On Prayer.

those already named, but all other good things from the Lord our God.

For prayer is the instrument for obtaining all the graces which stream down upon us from that Divine fount of goodness and love.

By prayer (if thou use it well) thou wilt put a sword into the hand of God, that He may fight and conquer for thee.

And to use it well thou must have formed or be striving to acquire the following habits:

First, there must ever live within thee an earnest desire to serve His Divine majesty in all things, and in the way most acceptable to Him.

In order to kindle this desire within thee, consider well,

That God is supremely worthy to be served and honoured for His excellencies, wonderful above all wonders, His wisdom, goodness, majesty, beauty, and His other infinite perfections.

That to serve thee, He toiled and suffered three and thirty years, binding up and healing the putrefying sores, envenomed by the poison of sin, not with oil, or wine, or linen, but with the precious stream that flowed from His most sacred veins, and with His most pure flesh, torn by scourges, thorns, and nails.

And consider further the great value of this service; *for by it we gain the mastery over*

On Prayer.

ourselves and Satan, and are made sons of God Himself.

Secondly, thou must have a lively faith and confidence that the Lord will give thee all things needful for His service and thy good.

This holy confidence is the vessel which Divine mercy fills with the treasures of His Grace ; and, the larger and more capacious it is, the richer will our prayer return into our bosom.

For how should the Unchangeable and Almighty God fail to make us partakers of His gifts, when He has Himself commanded us to ask for them, promising to give us His Spirit also, if with faith and perseverance we ask for It?

Thirdly, thou must draw nigh to prayer with the intention to seek God's will alone, and not thine own, as well in asking as in obtaining what thou askest ; that is, thou must dispose thyself to pray because God wills it, and desire to be heard in so far only as He wills it. In short, thine intention should be to unite thy will to the Will of God, and not to bend God's Will to thine.

And this because thy will, being tainted and corrupted by self-love, very often errs and *knows* not what it asks ; but the Divine Will, *always* united to ineffable Goodness, can never

On Prayer.

err. Therefore is the Will of God the rule and ruler of all other wills, and deserves and wills to be followed and obeyed by all.

Thou shouldest therefore always ask such things as are conformable to God's Will ; and if thou doubt whether any be so or not, ask it only on the condition of the Lord being willing for thee to have it.

And such things as thou knowest to be pleasing to Him, such as virtues, thou wilt ask for, rather in order to serve and please Him, than for any other end or motive, however spiritual.

Fourthly, in going to prayer thou must be adorned with works corresponding to thy petitions, and, after thou hast prayed, labour the more earnestly to render thyself fit for the grace and virtue thou desirest.

For the exercise of prayer must be so accompanied by the exercise of self-discipline, that the one may revolve round the other ; else, to ask for a virtue, and not exert oneself to practise it, would be rather tempting God than otherwise.

Fifthly, thy petitions must be preceded, for the most part, by thanksgivings for blessings received, in this or the like form :

“O Lord, Who of Thy Goodness hast created and redeemed me, and, times without

On Prayer.

number, unknown to myself, hast delivered me out of the hands of my enemies, help me now, and deny me not my request, though I have been ever rebellious and ungrateful unto Thee."

And if thou art asking for some special virtue, and hast at the time some occasion of painfully exercising this very quality, do not forget to thank God for the opportunity He has given thee, for this is no small loving-kindness on His part.

Sixthly, because prayer draws its force and power of bending God to our desires from the bounty and mercy of His own nature, and from the merits of the life and passion of His only-begotten Son, and from the gracious promise which He has made to hear us—thou wilt end thy petitions with one or more of the following short sentences :

"O Lord, grant me this grace, of Thy great mercy ! May the merits of Thy Son obtain for me that which I ask of Thee. Be mindful of Thy promises, O my God, and incline Thine ear to my prayers."

Seventhly, we must persevere in prayer, because humble perseverance conquers the unconquerable. For if the importunity and assiduity of the widow in the gospel inclined to her request the judge laden with all iniquity (Luke xviii.), how should a like perseverance

On Prayer.

fail to incline to our petitions God, Who is Himself the fountain of all goodness.

And though, after thou hast prayed, the Lord should defer answering thee, nay, though He even seem to reject thee, still pray on, and hold fast a firm and lively trust in His help, for in Him there are not wanting, nay, there abound in boundless measure, all things needful to create graces in others.

Therefore, if there be no impediment on thy side, doubt not but that thou shalt always obtain all that thou askest, or something else more expedient for thee, or, it may be, both one and the other.

And the more He seems to repulse thee, the more do thou humble thyself in thine own eyes, and reflecting on thy unworthiness, with stedfast thought of the mercy of God, strengthen more and more thy trust in it, which if thou keep lively and unshaken, the more it is assailed, the more acceptable will it be to thy Lord.

Give Him then thanks without ceasing, acknowledging Him to be good, and wise, and loving, no less when some things are denied thee, than when they are all granted thee; happen what may, remain thou ever stedfast and joyful, in humble submission to His Divine providence.

On Mental Prayer.

CHAPTER XLV.

WHAT CONSTITUTES MENTAL PRAYER.

MENTAL prayer is a lifting up of the mind to God in actual or virtual supplication for what we desire.

The *actual* is, when with words framed but unspoken, we ask for grace in this, or such-like manner :

“ O Lord my God, grant me this grace for Thine honour ;” or, “ O Lord, I believe it to be pleasing unto Thee and for Thy glory, that I should ask and receive this grace of Thee ; fulfil then now Thy Divine Will in me.”

And when actually assaulted by enemies, pray after this manner :

“ Haste, O my God, to help me, that I yield not to my enemies ;” or, “ My God, my Refuge, the Strength of my heart, help me quickly that I fall not.”

And if the conflict continue, do thou also go on praying in this way, manfully resisting thy enemy all the while.

When the heat of the conflict is past, turn to *thy* Lord, present before Him the enemy

On Mental Prayer.

that has assailed thee, and thy faintness in resisting him, and say,

“Behold, Lord, the creature of Thy bounty, the work of Thy Hands, redeemed with Thy Blood. Behold thine enemy who strives to rob Thee of it, and to devour it. To Thee, my Lord, do I fly; in Thee alone do I trust, Who art All-Powerful and good, and seest my weakness, and my proneness, without Thy help, to become a willing captive. Help me then, my Hope, and the Strength of my soul!”

By *virtual* supplication I mean, lifting up the mind to God to obtain some grace, showing Him our need of it without moulding our thought into words. As when I lift up my mind to God, and there in His Presence acknowledge that I am unable to shield myself from evil, or do good, and burning with desire to serve Him humbly, and in faith awaiting His help, I admire and contemplate Him the Lord.

Such an acknowledgment, kindled with desire, or faith towards God, is a prayer which virtually asks for what I need; and the more clear and sincere the acknowledgment, the more burning the desire, the more lively the faith, the more effectual will be the prayer.

Of Meditation.

There is another sort of virtual prayer more instant still, made by a mere glance of the mind to God to obtain His help, which glance is nothing but a silent remembrancer and entreaty for that grace which we have before prayed for.

And thou shouldest diligently learn this kind of prayer, and become familiar with it, because, as experience will show thee, it is a weapon of unspeakable value and help, which thou mayest easily have in hand at all times and on all occasions.



CHAPTER XLVI.

ON PRAYER BY MEANS OF MEDITATION.

IF thou desire to pray for a certain space of time—half an hour, or perhaps a whole hour or more—thou wilt add to prayer a meditation on the Life and Passion of Jesus Christ, always applying His actions to that virtue which thou desirest.

Thus, if thou desire to obtain the virtue of patience, thou wilt, perhaps, take for the subject of thy meditation some points in the mystery of the Scourging.

Of Meditation.

First. How, after the command given by Pilate, our Lord was dragged, amid scoffs and cries, by the ministers of wickedness, to the place appointed for His Scourging.

Secondly. How He was stripped by them with headlong fury, so that His most Pure Flesh was left naked and exposed.

Thirdly. How His innocent Hands were made tight with hard cords and bound to the pillar.

Fourthly. How His whole body was torn and gashed with the scourges, so that His Divine Blood flowed in streams down to the ground.

Fifthly. How, by repeated stripes on the same place, the anguish of the Wounds already inflicted was still more aggravated.

Having thus proposed to thyself these or similar subjects of meditation, in order to acquire patience, thou wilt first apply thy senses to feel, as deeply as possible, the most bitter anguish and acute pains which thy dear Lord endured in each part of His most sacred Body, and in every part of it at once.

Thence thou wilt pass on to His most Holy Soul; as far as thou canst, enter into the patience and meekness with which He bore so many afflictions, which yet could not satisfy His *longing desire* to suffer even greater and

Of Meditation.

more excruciating tortures for His Father's Honour and our good.

Then behold him inflamed with an ardent desire that thou shouldest willingly bear thy affliction, and see how He, still turning to the Father, prays for thee, that He would deign to give thee grace patiently to bear the cross which is then tormenting thee, and any other which may be laid upon thee.

Hence bowing thy will again and again to will to suffer all with a patient spirit, after this turn thy mind to the Father, and having first thanked Him for having out of His pure love, sent His Only-Begotten Son into the world, to bear such bitter torments and to pray for thee, then ask of Him the virtue of patience, through the Works and Prayers of His Beloved Son.



CHAPTER XLVII.

OF ANOTHER WAY OF PRAYING BY MEANS
OF MEDITATION.

THOU mayest also pray and meditate in another way.

After thou hast well considered the Sorrows of the Lord, and meditated upon His cheer-

Meditation on the Passion.

ful acceptance of them, thou wilt pass on from the greatness of His Travail and of His Patience, to two other considerations.

The one, of His Merit.

The other, of the Satisfaction and Glory of the Eternal Father, derived from the perfect Obedience of His Son in His Passion.

And representing these two things to His Divine Majesty, thou wilt ask (through them) the grace which thou desirest. And this thou mayest do, not only in each Mystery of the Lord's Passion, but in each particular act, whether inward or outward, done by Him in each Mystery.



CHAPTER XLVIII.

OF MEDITATION ON THE PASSION.

WHAT I have said above concerning the Lord's Passion, relates to prayer and meditation by way of petition. I will now show how we may thence excite divers affections.

Thou dost purpose (for example) to meditate on the Crucifixion. In this Mystery thou mayest dwell, among other points, upon the following:

Meditation on the Passion.

First. How, when the Lord was furiously stripped on Mount Calvary by that phrenzied multitude, His Flesh, which, through the scourgings He had endured, adhered to His Garments, was torn in flakes.

Secondly. How the crown of thorns was taken off His Head, and, being again pressed down upon It, wounded Him afresh.

Thirdly. How, with the strokes of a hammer and with nails, He was cruelly fastened to the Cross.

Fourthly. How His Sacred Limbs, which could not reach the holes made to receive the nails, were stretched by these savage dogs so violently, that the dislocated Bones might be told one by one.

Fifthly. How, as the Lord hung upon the hard wood, supported only by the nails, the weight of His Body, bearing downwards, enlarged His most Sacred Wounds, and aggravated their inexpressible agony.

Desiring then, by these or other points, to excite in thyself the affection of love, strive by meditation upon them to pass from knowledge to deeper knowledge of thy Lord's infinite Goodness and Love towards thee, Who for thee willed to suffer such cruel torments. For the more thou dost advance in this knowledge, the more will thy love increase.

Meditation on the Passion.

And this knowledge of the Goodness and infinite Love shown thee by thy Lord will easily lead thee to contrition and grief for having so often and so ungratefully offended thy God, Who, for thine iniquities, was in so many ways ill-used and tortured.

To lead thyself to hope, consider that into this state of extreme misery did so Mighty a Lord descend, that He might destroy sin, and deliver thee from the snares of the Devil and of thine own special faults, that He might propitiate His Eternal Father in thy behalf, and give thee confidence to fly to Him in thine every need.

Joy will be evoked by passing from His Sufferings to their effects, namely, that by these He taketh away the sins of the whole world, appeases the Father's Wrath, confounds the prince of darkness, vanquishes death, and fills again the angelic ranks.

And be further moved to gladness because of the joy thereby imparted to the most Holy Trinity, together with the Church triumphant and militant.

To rouse thyself to hatred of thy sins, apply every point of thy meditation solely to thyself, as if the Lord had suffered for no other purpose save to teach thee to hate thine evil inclinations, and especially that one which most dominates

Meditation on the Passion.

thee, and is most displeasing to His Divine Goodness.

To move thee to wonder, consider what greater marvel can there be, than to behold the Creator of the Universe, Who giveth life to all things, persecuted unto death by His creatures; His Supreme Majesty trampled upon and abased; God's Justice condemned; His beauty despised; the Love of the Heavenly Father hated; that inward and inaccessible Light brought under the power of darkness; Glory and Blessedness Itself accounted the dishonour and scandal of mankind, and sunk into the extremest misery.

In order to feel with thy Suffering Lord, besides meditating upon His outward Agonies, thou must in thought penetrate into those untold, unexampled Sufferings which tortured Him inwardly. For, if thou grieve for the former, it were a marvel if thy heart break not with anguish at the thought of the latter.

The Soul of Christ beheld the Divine Essence as It now beholds It in Heaven, knew It to be beyond measure worthy of all honour and service, and, through His unspeakable Love for It, longed that all creatures should, with all their powers, be devoted therewith.

To see It then, on the contrary, so strangely outraged and dishonoured by the numberless

Meditation on the Passion.

sins and the abominable iniquities of men, pierced Him at one and the same moment with infinite pangs of grief, which tortured Him the more in proportion to the greatness of His Love and desire that all men should honour and obey so exalted a Majesty.

And, as the greatness of this Love and desire are beyond our understanding, even so none can ever know how heavy and bitter was the inward sorrow of the Crucified Lord on this account.

Furthermore, as He loved all creatures with a Love unspeakable, so, in proportion to that Love, did He grieve beyond measure for all their sins, by which they were about to separate themselves from Him. He grieved for every mortal sin which had been, or which should be committed by all men who had ever lived, or ever should live upon the earth. For every such sin, whensoever committed, separates the sinner's soul from the Soul of the Lord, to Which it was united by love.

A separation this, more painful than dismemberment of the body—inasmuch as the soul being a pure spirit, and more noble and perfect than the body—is therefore more capable of suffering.

Amid all these sufferings for His creatures, the most bitter was that which the Lord

Meditation on the Passion.

endured because of all the sins of the damned, who as they could never more be re-united to Him, were to suffer torments eternal and beyond comparison.

And if the soul, touched by these sufferings of her Beloved Saviour, will enter still more deeply into the contemplation of them, she will find deep cause for compassion, in the heavy Sorrows endured by Him, not only for sins actually committed, but also for all possible forms of sin. For, without doubt, both the pardon of the former, and preservation from the latter, have been purchased for us by our Lord, at the price of His precious Sufferings.

Nor will other considerations, beloved, be wanting to bring thee to sympathize in the Passion of the Crucified.

For there never has been, nor will be, grief of any kind, endured by any reasonable being whatsoever, which He in Himself has not felt.

Insults, temptations, infamy, penance, every grief and trouble which man can know, pierced more keenly the Soul of Christ, more sharply than the souls of those who suffered them.

For all their sufferings, both great and small, of soul and body, even to a slight headache or a prick of a needle, were perfectly seen by our most Pitiful Lord, Who of His boundless

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Charity was pleased to compassionate them, and engrave them in His Heart.

But who can tell His anguish of spirit at the sorrows of His most Holy Mother? For in every way, and in every respect, in which the Lord sorrowed and suffered, did the Holy Virgin also sorrow and suffer most bitterly, though less intensely.

And these her griefs opened afresh the inward Wounds of Her Blessed Son. These, like so many fiery darts of love, pierced His most loving Heart, which, by reason of all the tortures above named, and of others, infinite in number, yet hidden from us, may be well described (as a devout soul was wont with holy simplicity to call it) "a loving hell of voluntary pains."

If thou, my beloved, consider well the cause of all this anguish, borne by our Crucified Redeemer and Lord, thou wilt find it is nothing else but sin.

Hence it plainly follows, that the genuine way of shewing the sympathy and gratitude He requires of us, and which we are unspeakably bound to render to Him, is to mourn over our offences purely for love of Him; to hate sin with a deadly hatred, and to fight bravely against all His enemies and our own evil inclinations; that so putting off the old

Of the Crucifixion.

man with his deeds, we may put on the new, and adorn our souls with the virtues of the Christian character.



CHAPTER XLIX.

OF THE PROFIT TO BE DERIVED FROM MEDITATION ON THE CRUCIFIED LORD AND OF THE IMITATION OF HIS HOLINESS.

AMONG many other lessons to be learned from this holy meditation, one is, not only to sorrow over thy past sins, but also to grieve for the disorderly passions still alive within thee, which have nailed thy Lord to the Cross.

Another is, to ask pardon for thy sins, and grace to loathe thyself, that thou mayest never more offend Him, but in return for His many Sufferings for thee, love and serve Him henceforth perfectly, which, without this holy hatred of self, will be impossible.

The third, effectually to persecute unto death each one of thy evil inclinations, how trifling soever it may be.

The fourth is, to strive with all thy might to imitate the virtues of the Saviour, Who suffered not only to redeem us, by making atonement

Of the Crucifixion.

for our iniquities, but also to set us an example to follow His holy steps.

Here I would propose to thee a method of meditation, which may serve to this end.

Wouldst thou then (for example) acquire patience, in order to imitate Christ thy Lord, consider the following points:

First. What the Soul of Christ Crucified did towards God.

Secondly. What God did towards the Soul of Christ.

Thirdly. What the Soul of Christ did towards Itself, and towards His most Holy Body.

Fourthly. How Christ acted towards us.

Fifthly. What we should act towards Christ.

First, then, consider how the Soul of Christ, intent wholly upon God, was amazed to see that infinite incomprehensible Greatness, compared with which all created things are as a mere nothing, subjected to endure on earth the most unworthy treatment, (yet still abiding immoveable in Its Glory,) and this for man, from whom It has never received aught but unfaithfulness and insults; consider how His Soul adored God, gave Him thanks, and offered Itself wholly unto Him.

Secondly. Behold attentively what God did towards the Soul of Christ; how He willed and impelled It to endure, for our sake,

Of the Crucifixion.

buffetings, spittings, blasphemies, scourgings, thorns, and the Cross, making known His pleasure to see It loaded with every kind of grief and ignominy.

Thirdly. Pass on to the Soul of Christ, and think how, perceiving with Its understanding, which is Light Itself, how great was this Good-pleasure of God, and with Its affection, which is Fire Itself, loving His Divine Majesty with a boundless love, both for His infinite Merit, and because of its immense obligations unto Him, and being called by Him to suffer for love of us and for our example, contended and joyful, It disposed Itself readily to obey the Divine Will.

And who can fathom the deep longings of that most pure and loving Soul thus to suffer?

It dwelt, as it were, in a labyrinth of sorrows, ever seeking yet not finding (as It would) new ways and modes of suffering. Yet did It freely give Its whole Self, and Its most innocent Flesh, as a prey to wicked men and infernal spirits, to be dealt with as they would.

Fourthly. Then look unto thy Saviour, as He turns His pitying Eyes on thee, and says, "Behold, my child, whither thy unbridled wishes have carried Me, because thou wouldest not do a little violence to thyself. Behold, *how much and how joyfully I suffer for love of thee, and to set thee a pattern of true patience.*

Of Meditating on Christ Crucified.

By all my Grievs I entreat thee, dear child, to bear willingly this cross, and any other which may be more pleasing to Me, leaving thyself wholly in the hands of all the persecutors whom I may permit to molest thee, be they ever so vile and cruel against thine honour and thy body. Oh, didst thou but know the comfort this will give Me! But thou mayest clearly see it in these Wounds, which I have willed to receive as costly jewels, in order to adorn with precious virtues that poor soul of thine, which is dear to Me beyond conception. And if, for this, I am brought to such extremity, wherefore, beloved spouse, wilt thou not suffer a little, in order to satisfy My Heart, and soothe those Wounds, caused by thine impatience, which grieved Me so bitterly, yea, far more than the Wounds themselves?"

Fifthly. Next consider well Who it is that thus speaks to thee, and thou wilt see that it is Christ Himself, the King of Glory, Very God, and Very Man. Consider the greatness of His torments and ignominy, which would have exceeded the deserts of the vilest criminal. Behold thy Lord, not only calm and marvelously patient under all these outrages, but rejoicing in them as at His Marriage. And as a little water does but fan the flame, so, with the *increase of Agonies*, which to His abundant

Of Meditating on Christ Crucified.

Love seemed little, did His joy increase, and His longing to suffer yet greater ones. Reflect that thy most merciful Lord did and suffered all this, not of necessity, nor for any benefit to Himself, but (as He has told thee) out of His love for thee, and that thou mightest exercise thyself, after His pattern, in the virtue of patience. Endeavour then to acquire a knowledge of what He requires of thee, and of the delight thou wilt give Him by exercising thyself in this virtue, make acts of burning desire to bear, not only patiently, but joyfully, thy present cross, and every other, though it were heavier, to imitate thy God and the better to console Him. And picturing to thyself His shame and bitterness endured for thee, His constancy and patience, blush to think thine even the shadow of His patience, or thy sorrows and thy shame real. And fear and tremble, lest the least thought of unwillingness to suffer for love of thy Lord, find even a moment's resting-place within thy heart.

My beloved, this Crucified Lord is the book I give thee to read ; from it thou mayest draw the true picture of every virtue. For it is the Book of Life, which not only by words teaches the understanding, but also by Its living example inflames the will.

The whole world is filled with books, and

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yet all put together cannot teach so perfectly the way to acquire all virtues, as doth the contemplation of God Crucified.

And know, beloved, that they who spend many hours in weeping over our Lord's Passion, and meditating on His Patience, and then, when troubles overtake them, are as impatient as if in prayer they had learnt quite a different lesson, are like the soldiers of this world, who in the tents, before the hour of battle, promise themselves great things, but at the first appearance of the enemy, throw down their arms and take flight. What can be more foolish and miserable, than to behold, as in a bright mirror, the Virtues of the Lord, to love them and admire them, and then, when there is the opportunity to practise them, wholly to forget and disregard them?



CHAPTER L.

OF THE MOST HOLY SACRAMENT OF THE
EUCCHARIST.

THUS far, beloved, I have furnished thee with four weapons which thou needest in order to conquer thine enemies, and with many directions how to use them well. There

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yet remains one other to lay before thee ; namely, the most holy Sacrament of the Eucharist.

For inasmuch as this Sacrament is above all other means of grace, so is this fifth weapon superior to all the others.

The four above-named derive their value from the Merits and Grace purchased for us by the Blood of Christ, but this weapon is the Very Flesh and Blood joined to the Soul and Divinity of Christ.

With the former we fight against our enemies in the strength of Christ ; with the latter we fight against them together with Christ, and Christ fights against them together with us. For whoso eateth the Flesh of Christ and drinketh His Blood dwelleth in Christ, and Christ in him.

And seeing that this weapon, even this most Holy Sacrament, may be taken and used in two ways ; namely, sacramentally once every day, and spiritually every hour and moment ; thou must not neglect to take It very often in the second way, and as often as is profitable for thy soul's health in the first.



the Holy Communion.

CHAPTER LI.

OF THE WAY IN WHICH WE OUGHT TO
RECEIVE THE MOST HOLY SACRAMENT OF
THE EUCHARIST.

WE may approach this most Divine Sacra-
ment for divers ends, to attain which
we have different things to do, dividing them
into three periods.

Before Communion ;

When we are about to Communicate ;

And after Communion.

Before Communion (whatever be our object
in receiving It) we must wash and purify our-
selves, by true Penitence, from all stain of
mortal sin, and with the whole heart's affection
give our whole self, with all our soul, all our
strength, and all our powers, without reserve to
Jesus Christ, and to His Good-pleasure, since
He, in this Most Holy Sacrament, gives us His
Blood and His Flesh, with His Soul, His
Divinity, and His Merits. And seeing that
our gift is little, nay, nothing compared with
His, we should desire to possess all that has
ever been offered and given to Him by all

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creatures, earthly and heavenly, in order to offer it to His Divine Majesty.

Wouldest thou then receive It in order to conquer and destroy within thee thine enemies and His? begin on the eve of thy Communion, or earlier, to meditate on the desire of the Son of God, that in this most Holy Sacrament thou shouldest give Him a place in thine heart, that He may unite Himself to thee, and help thee to fight against all thine evil passions.

So great and boundless is this desire of our Lord, that no created intellect can understand it.

That thou mayest, in some degree, do so, thou wilt fix deeply in thy mind two things :

One is, the unspeakable joy of the All-Gracious God to dwell with us, for He calls it His delight.

The other, His hatred of sin above all things, both as an obstacle and hindrance to His union with us, which He so much desires ; and also as being wholly opposed to His Divine Perfections. For being Himself Supreme Good, Pure Light, and Infinite Beauty, He cannot but infinitely hate and detest sin, which is nought but darkness, defect, and an intolerable stain on our souls.

So burning is this hatred of the Lord against sin, that all the works of the Old and New

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Testament were ordained for its destruction, and, above all, those of the most Holy Passion of His Son, Who (as God's enlightened servants have said) would, if needful, expose Himself anew to a thousand deaths, in order to destroy in us every fault, even the very smallest.

These considerations will enable thee to understand, though very imperfectly, how greatly the Lord desires to enter into thine heart, that He may drive out thence and utterly destroy all His enemies and thine, and so wilt thou be stirred up to an earnest desire, on thy part, to receive Him for the same end.

Thus encouraged and inspirited by the hope that thy Heavenly Captain will come into thee, often call to battle the passion which thou hast undertaken to conquer, and repress it, hating it again and again with thy whole will, and making acts of the contrary virtue. This thou shouldest continue to do, both in the evening and the morning before the most Holy Communion.

Then, when about to receive the most Holy Sacrament, review briefly all the faults which, since thy last Communion, thou hast committed, as though God were not, or as if He had not endured so much for thee in the Mysteries of the *Cross*, how thou hast made more account

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of some trifling pleasure, and of thine own wishes, than of the Will of God or His Honour, and with shame of thyself, and a holy fear, thou wilt sink into thine ingratitude and unworthiness.

But reflecting again that the immeasurable deep of thy Lord's Goodness calls to the deep of thine ingratitude and faithlessness, draw near to Him with confidence, giving Him abundant room in thy heart, that He may make Himself wholly its master.

And this thou wilt do, when thou hast driven from thy heart all affection whatsoever to the creature, closing it fast that none may enter into it but thy Lord only.

When thou hast communicated, retire immediately into the inner sanctuary of thy heart, and having first adored Him, then with all humility and reverence converse in spirit with thy Lord, saying :—

“Thou seest, O my Only Good, how easily I offend Thee, and how great power this passion has over me, and that of myself I am not able to free myself. This fight, then, is chiefly Thine, and from Thee Alone do I hope for victory, though I too must needs fight.”

Then turning to the Eternal Father, offer to Him for a thank-offering, and for victory over thyself, His Blessed Son Whom He has given

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thee, and Whom thou hast now within thee. Attack the passion vigorously, in faith awaiting the victory from God, Who, though He seem to delay for a while, will never fail thee, if thou, on thy part, makest every possible effort.



CHAPTER LII.

**HOW TO PREPARE FOR COMMUNION, IN ORDER
TO EXCITE WITHIN US THE LOVE OF GOD.**

IN order to excite thyself to love thy God, by means of this most heavenly Sacrament, let thy meditation on the evening before be upon His Love to thee.

How that Great and Almighty Lord, not content with having created thee after His Own Image and Likeness, and with having sent His Only-Begotten Son on earth to suffer during three and thirty years for thine iniquities, and to endure the most bitter sorrows, and the painful death of the Cross, was further pleased for thy redemption to leave Him with thee for thy Food and Support, in the most Holy Sacrament of the Altar.

Consider well, beloved, the inconceivable

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excellence of this Love, which renders it perfect and unequalled in all points.

First. If we look at its duration, Our God has loved us unceasingly, and without beginning ; and as He is Eternal in His Divinity, so is His Love Eternal, whereby, before all worlds, He determined in His Heart to give us His Son in this marvellous way.

Rejoicing at this within thyself, say, with secret joy, "In that abyss of eternity, my littleness was then so loved and prized by the most High God, that He thought of me, and desired with love unspeakable to give me His Own Son to be my Food."

Secondly. All other love, how great soever, has some bound which it cannot pass, but this Love of our Lord is alone without measure.

Willing, therefore, to satisfy Himself fully, He has given His Own Son, in Majesty and Infinity Equal to Himself, of One and the Same Substance and Nature. Hence the Love is as great as the Gift, and the Gift as great as the Love, and such the greatness of both, that no power of mind can conceive any thing greater.

Thirdly. Neither was God drawn to love us by any force or necessity, but His Own natural Goodness alone moved Him to so great and incomprehensible a love towards us.

the Holy Communion.

Fourthly. Neither could any work or desert of ours have induced this Mighty Lord to manifest such exceeding love towards our wretchedness; but of His free Bounty alone has He given Himself wholly to us, His most unworthy creatures.

Fifthly. If thou consider the purity of this love, thou wilt see that it is not, like worldly love, mingled with aught of self-interest. For the Lord needs not any thing of ours, being, without us, most Blessed and Glorious in Himself Alone; but He pours forth His unspeakable Goodness and Love upon us, not for His benefit, but for ours.

Reflecting well upon this, thou wilt say in thine heart, "How is it that so Mighty a Lord sets His Heart upon so vile a creature? What wouldest Thou, O King of Glory? What dost thou expect from me, who am but dust? I see well, O my God, by the light of Thy burning Charity, that thou hast but one design, which discovers to me more plainly the purity of Thy love for me. For to this end only dost Thou give me Thy Whole Self to be my Food, that I may be wholly changed into Thee; and this, not because Thou hast any need of me, but that Thou living in me, and I in Thee, I may, by a loving union, become Thyself, and that of the vileness of my earthly

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heart there may be made with Thee one only Divine Heart."

Then, full of wonder and joy, to see thyself so highly prized and loved by God, and knowing that He, by His Almighty Love, seeks and wills only to draw all thy love to Himself, withdraw thyself first from all creatures, and then from thyself also, as being a creature, and offer thyself, without reserve, as a whole burnt-offering to thy Lord, that henceforth His Love alone, and His Divine pleasure, may guide thine understanding, thy will and thy memory, and rule all thy senses.

And then, perceiving that nothing is so powerful to produce in thee such Divine effects, as worthily to receive Him in the most holy Sacrament of the Altar, to this end open thine heart to Him with the following ejaculatory and loving aspirations :

"O most heavenly Food, when will the hour come, when with no other fire but that of Thy love, I may wholly sacrifice myself to Thee? When, when, O uncreated Love?

"O living Bread, when shall I live by Thee Alone, for Thee Alone, and to Thee Alone? When, my Life, Beauteous, Blessed, and Eternal Life?

"O Heavenly Manna ! when shall I, loathing all other earthly food, desire Thee Alone?

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feed on Thee Alone? When shall this be, O my Delight, my only Good? O my Loving and Almighty Lord, free now this wretched heart from every immoderate attachment, and from every evil passion; adorn it with Thy Holiness, and with the pure intention of doing all things solely to please Thee, that so I may open my heart to Thee, invite Thee, and, with gentle violence, compel Thee to come in, that Thou, O Lord, mayest then, without resistance, work in me all that Thou hast ever desired."

In such loving affections, thou mayest exercise thyself in the evening, and morning, as a preparation for Communion.

Then as the time of Communion draws near, think What it is thou art about to receive!

The Son of God, of Majesty Incomprehensible, before Whom the Heavens and all powers do tremble. The Holy of Holies, the Spotless Mirror, and Purity Incomprehensible, in comparison of Whom no creature is clean. He, Who as a very worm, and the outcast of the people, willed for love of thee to be rejected, trampled upon, mocked, spit upon, and crucified, by the malice and wickedness of men.

Thou art about to receive God, in Whose Hand are the life and death of the whole universe.

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Think, on the other hand, that as of th
thou art nothing, and hast, by thy sin
wickedness, made thyself lower than the
and most impure of irrational creatures,
art fit to be the sport and mockery of al
devils in hell.

That instead of being thankful for
immense and innumerable benefits, thou
in thy wilfulness and caprices, despise
Mighty and Loving a Lord, and trampled
His Precious Blood.

Yet, for all this, in His abiding Love,
unchangeable Goodness, He bids thee to
Heavenly Table; nay, at times constrains
to come to It on pain of death. He c
not the door of His Pity, nor turns away
Divine Presence from thee, though by n
thou art leprous, lame, diseased, blind,
sessed by devils, and hast "gone after r
lovers."

This only does He ask of thee :

First. To mourn over thine offence ag
Him.

Secondly. Above all things to hate sin,
great and small.

Thirdly. To offer and give thyself up w
to His Will, and His Obedience, and
with the affections always, and in act
occasion offers.

the Holy Communion.

Fourthly. To hope and firmly believe that He will forgive thee, cleanse thee, and guard thee from all thine enemies.

Encouraged by this ineffable Love of the Lord, thou wilt then draw nigh to communicate with a holy and loving fear, saying :

“ Lord, I am not worthy to receive Thee, because of the many many times I have grievously offended Thee, nor have I yet mourned, as I ought, over my offences against Thee.

“ Lord, I am not worthy to receive Thee, for I am not perfectly cleansed from all affection for venial sins.

“ Lord, I am not worthy to receive Thee, for I have not yet given myself up sincerely to Thy Love, to Thy Will, and to Thy Obedience.

“ O my Almighty Lord, Infinite in Goodness, for Thy Goodness and Word's sake, make me worthy, that with this faith I may receive Thee, O my Soul's Love.”

When thou hast communicated, shut thyself up immediately in the sanctuary of thy heart, and forgetting all created things, hold converse with thy Lord in the following, or such like form :

“ O Highest King of Heaven, what has brought Thee within me, who am miserable, poor, blind, and naked ?” And He will answer — “ Love.”

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And thou, in reply, wilt say, "O uncreated Love, O sweet Love, what wilt Thou from me?"

And He will say to thee, "Nothing but love." "I will that no other fire burn upon the altar of thy heart, and in thy sacrifices, and in all thy works, but the fire of My Love, which, consuming all other love and all self-will, will be a most sweet savour unto Me.

"This I have asked of thee, and still ask, because I desire to be wholly thine, and thou wholly Mine. This will never be, till making that entire surrender of thyself which so delights Me, thou art loosed from all love of self, self-opinion, self-will, and self-esteem.

"I ask thee to hate thyself, that I may give thee My Love; I ask thy heart, that it may be united unto Mine, Which to this end was pierced upon the Cross; and I ask thy whole self, that I may become wholly thine.

"Thou seest that I am of priceless value, yet of My Goodness I value Myself but at thy value. Buy Me then now, O My beloved, by giving Me thyself.

"I will this of thee, beloved, that thou shouldest will nothing, think nothing, understand nothing, see nothing, but Me and My Will, that in thee I may will all, think all, understand all, and see all; so that thy nothingness, being absorbed in the depth of My

Of Spiritual Communion.

nfinity, may be changed into It. So wilt thou be fully happy and blessed in Me, and I wholly content in thee."

Lastly, thou wilt offer to the Father, His Son, first, for a thank-offering, then for thy wants, and those of all the Holy Church, of all belonging to thee, or to whom thou art in any way bound, and for all here below, or departed in the faith and fear of Christ, and this offering thou wilt make in memory of and in union with that which He made of Himself, when, hanging all bleeding on the Cross, He offered Himself to the Father.

In this way thou mayest likewise offer to Him all the sacrifices offered on that day throughout the Holy Catholic Church.



CHAPTER LIII.

OF SPIRITUAL COMMUNION.

THOUGH we may not receive the Lord sacramentally more than once a day, yet we may all (as I have before said) receive Him spiritually every hour, and every moment, unless through negligence, or some other fault of ours, He be withdrawn from us.

Of Spiritual Communion.

And this spiritual Communion will sometimes be more fruitful, and dearer to God, than many Sacramental Communions, which may fail to be so through the faults of the recipients.

As often then as thou shalt dispose thyself and prepare for such Communion, thou wilt find the Son of God ready, with His Own Hands, to give Himself to thee for thy spiritual Food.

By way of preparation, turn to Him with thy whole mind ; and after a brief review of thy short-comings, mourn with Him over thine offences, and in all humility and faith beseech Him, that He would deign to come into thy poor soul with new grace, to heal it, and strengthen it against the enemy.

Or when about to do violence to thyself, or to mortify any one of thine appetites, or to do some act of virtue, do all with a view to make ready thy heart for the Lord, Who continually asks it of thee ; and then turning to Him, invite Him earnestly to come with His grace to heal thee, and deliver thee from thine enemies, that He Alone may possess thy heart.

Or else, calling to mind thy last Sacramental Communion, say with a kindled heart, " When, O my Lord, shall I receive Thee again? When? O when? "

Of Spiritual Communion.

But if thou wouldest prepare thyself, and communicate spiritually in a more fitting way, on the evening before direct all mortifications, acts of virtue, and every other good work to this end : to receive thy Lord spiritually.

And early in the morning, strive to kindle in thy heart a great desire to receive Him in order to please Him, by considering how great is the good and happiness of that soul which worthily receives the most Holy Sacrament of the Altar ; for in It lost virtues are regained, the soul returns to her first beauty, and the fruits and merits of the Passion of the Son of God are communicated to her. Consider also, how pleasing it is to God, that we receive this Sacrament, and have these blessings.

When this desire is kindled within thee, turn to Him and say : " Since, Lord, I am not allowed to receive Thee sacramentally this day, vouchsafe, O Power and Goodness Uncreate, to forgive me all my faults, and heal me, that so I may worthily receive Thee spiritually now, every hour, and every day, and grant me new grace and strength against all my enemies, and especially against that one, upon whom, for thy pleasure, I am now making war."



CHAPTER LIV.

OF THANKSGIVING.

SINCE all the good we have and do, is of God, and from God, we are bound to give Him thanks for every good exercise and every victory, and for all the blessings, general and particular, which we have received from His Pitiful Hand.

And to do this in a fitting manner, we must consider the end for which the Lord vouchsafes to communicate His graces to us; for, from this consideration and knowledge, we come to learn how God wills that we return thanks.

And because in every blessing the Lord chiefly designs His own Honour, and to draw us to His love and service, first consider with thyself thus: "With what power, wisdom, and goodness has my God bestowed upon me this grace and blessing!"

Then, seeing that in thee there is not any thing of thine own worthy of any blessing, but, on the contrary, nothing but unworthiness and ingratitude, thou wilt say to thy Lord, with deep humility:

"How is it that Thou, O Lord, deignest to

Of Self-Oblation.

look upon a dead dog, bestowing so many blessings upon me? Blessed be Thy Name for ever and ever."

And lastly, seeing that by the blessing He asks thee to love and serve Him, inflame thyself with love towards so loving a Lord, and with a sincere desire to serve Him in His way.

And to this end, thou wilt also make a full oblation of thyself in the following manner.



CHAPTER LV.

OF SELF-OBLATION.

TWO things are necessary in order that thy self-oblation be in all points dear to God. One is, union with the offerings which Christ made to the Father. The other, that thy will be loosed from all immoderate attachment to any created thing.

First. Thou must know that the Son of God, when living in this vale of tears, offered to His Heavenly Father, not Himself only and His works, but with Himself, us also and our works. So that our offerings must be made in union with, and in dependence upon His.

Secondly. Consider well, before thou offer

Of Self-Oblation.

up thyself, whether thy will has any undue affection ; for if so, it must first be loosed from every such affection ; and for this have recourse to God, that He, with His right Hand, may free thee ; so that, loosed and free from all things else, thou mayest be able to offer thyself wholly unto His Divine Majesty.

And be very watchful on this point ; because, if thou offer thyself to God while bound to the creature, thou offerest not thine own, but that which is another's, seeing thou art not thine own, but dost belong to those creatures to whom thy will is bound ; a thing most displeasing to the Lord, as being a mere mockery.

Hence it is, that not only do so many of our oblations of ourselves to God return to us empty and fruitless, but we afterwards fall into divers failings and sins.

We may, indeed, offer ourselves to God, though still cleaving to His creatures, but only in order that His goodness may loose us, to the end that we may give ourselves up wholly to His Divine Majesty and to His service ; and this we should do often, and with great affection.

Let then thy oblation be without thought of earthly affection, or self-will of any kind, looking neither to earthly nor heavenly blessings,

Of Self-Oblation.

only to the Will and ordering of God, to which thou shouldest submit and sacrifice thyself wholly as a perpetual burnt-offering, and separated from all created things, say: "Behold, O Lord and Creator, each and all my desires give into the hand of Thy Will and Thine eternal Providence. Do with me as seemeth good to Thee in life and in death, as in time, so in eternity."

If thou dost this in sincerity (which will be seen when adverse things befall thee), thou wilt become a dealer, not in earthly, but in most blessed and heavenly goods; for thou wilt be God's, and God will be thine; seeing that He ever dwells with those who, taking themselves away from all creatures and from themselves, give up and sacrifice their whole selves to His Divine Majesty.

Here then, beloved, thou seest a most powerful means of overcoming all thine enemies; for if this oblation so unite thee to God, that thou dost become wholly His, and He wholly thine, what enemy, or what power, can ever hurt thee?

And when thou wouldest offer to Him any of thy works, as fasts, prayers, acts of patience, or other good deeds, first turn thy thoughts to the Offering which Christ made to the Father of His fasts, prayers, and other works, and, in

If thou wouldest offer the work
to thy Heavenly Father for thine of
wilt do it in the following manner :

Thou wilt take a general, and
particular review of thy sins ;
clearly that it is impossible for thee
to appease the wrath of God, or to
Divine Justice, thou wilt turn to the
Passion of His Son, meditating upon
of His Works ; as for example
fasted, prayed, suffered, or shed
thou wilt thereby see, that to pay
Father towards thee, and to pay
thine iniquities, He offered to His
Works, His Sufferings, and His I
as it were :

“ Behold, O eternal Father,
Thy Will, I make superabundant
to Thy Justice for the sins and

Of Sensible Devotion.

not only from one Mystery to another, but also from one act of each Mystery to another ; and thou mayest use this mode of oblation not for thyself only, but for others also.



CHAPTER LVI.

OF SENSIBLE DEVOTION AND DRYNESS OF SPIRIT.

SENSIBLE devotion is produced sometimes by nature, sometimes by the devil, and sometimes by grace. By its fruits thou wilt discern its source ; for if it be not followed in thee by amendment of life, thou hast reason to doubt lest it come from the devil, or from nature ; and yet more, if it be accompanied by increased sweetness and attachment, and by somewhat of self-esteem.

When, therefore, thou feelest thy heart sweetened by spiritual delights, do not stand disputing as to whence they come ; do not dwell upon them, nor suffer thyself to be withdrawn from the knowledge of thy nothingness, but, with greater diligence and hatred of self, strive to keep thy heart free from all *attachment, even though spiritual, and desire*

Of Sensible Devotion

God alone and His good pleasure ; for
means the delight, be it of nature or
devil, will become to thee of grace.

Spiritual dryness may, in like m
proceed from the three following causes.

From the devil, to make our mind luke
and turn it away from spiritual impress
the business and pleasures of the world.

From ourselves, through our fault
earthly attachments, and negligences.

From grace, and to warn us that we b
diligent to forsake every attachmer
employment which is not of God, an
not terminate in Him ; or that we may
by experience that all good comes from
or that in future we may the more pri
gifts, and be more humble and careful to
them ; or to unite us more closely
Divine Majesty by the entire surren
ourselves, even in spiritual joys ; le
affections, being set on them, we divi
heart which the Lord would have who
Himself ; or else because, for our good
pleased to see us fight with our whole s
and put to account His grace.

If then thou feel dry, enter into thy
discover through what fault of thine th
been deprived of sensible devotion, an
against it, not to recover the sensible p

and Dryness of Spirit.

of grace, but to rid thyself of that which is displeasing to God.

And if thou discover not the fault, let thy sensible devotion be true devotion, which is, speedy resignation to the Will of God.

Take care, however, on no account to lay aside thy spiritual exercises ; but continue them with all thy might, however fruitless and insipid they may seem to thee, drinking willingly the cup of bitterness which in this dryness the loving Will of God holds out to thee.

And if at times this dryness of spirit be accompanied by such great and thick mental darkness, that thou knowest not which way to turn, nor what step to take, yet be not dismayed, but remain solitary and stedfast on the cross, far from every earthly pleasure, though offered to thee by the world or any creature.

Conceal thy sufferings from all except thy spiritual adviser, to whom thou wilt reveal them, not to lighten thy pain, but to learn how to bear them according to the Will of God.

Use communions, prayers, and other exercises, not that thou mayest come down from the cross, but to receive strength to exalt that cross to the greater glory of the Crucified.

And if through confusion of mind thou canst not meditate and pray as usual, meditate in the best way thou canst.

Of Sensible Devotion

And that which thou canst not do with the understanding, force thyself to do with the will and with the mouth, conversing with thyself and with the Lord ; for this will have wonderful effects, and thy heart will thus take breath and strength.

Thou mayest then, in such a case, say, "Why art thou so vexed, O my soul, and why art thou so disquieted within me? O put thy trust in God, for I will yet thank Him, Which is the Help of my countenance and my God."

"Why standest thou so far off, O Lord, and hidest Thy Face in the needful time of trouble? Forsake me not utterly."

And calling to mind that sacred teaching which God, in time of trouble, infused into His beloved Sarah, the wife of Tobias, do thou, too, make use of it, saying aloud : " But whoso serveth Thee knows assuredly, that his life, if passed in trial, will be crowned ; if in tribulation, will be freed ; and if in chastisement, he may fly to Thy mercy. For Thou delightest not in our destruction ; for Thou makest a calm to succeed a storm, and after tears and weeping, Thou infusest joy. Be Thy Name, O God of Israel, blessed for ever !"

Thou wilt also remember thy Christ, Who, in the garden and on the cross, was, to His great suffering, forsaken as regards the senses

and **Bravery of Spirit.**

by His Heavenly Father ; and bearing the cross with Him, say with all thy heart, "Thy Will be done."

So will thy patience and thy prayers raise the flame of thy heart's sacrifice to God, leaving thee truly devout. True devotion consisting (as I have said) in a lively and steadfast readiness of will to follow Christ with the cross on thy shoulder by whatever way He invites and calls us to Himself, to desire God for God, and sometimes to leave God for God.

And if many who are striving after the spiritual life, and especially women, would make this, and not sensible devotion, the measure of their progress, they would not be deceived by themselves nor by the devil, nor would they complain uselessly, nay, ungratefully, of so great a gift from the Lord ; but would give themselves up with greater fervour to serve His Divine Majesty, Who disposes or permits all things for His glory and our good.

And here again do those women deceive themselves, who avoid with fear and caution all occasions of sin ; yet, when at times harassed by horrible, impure, and frightful thoughts, and even by still more fearful visions, are confounded and disheartened, and think themselves forsaken by God, and wholly banished from Him, not believing it possible that

Of Sensible Devotion.

His Holy Spirit can dwell in a heart fill with such thoughts.

Thus cast down, they are ready to despair and leaving all their holy exercises, to turn back into Egypt.

Such persons do not rightly understand the favour the Lord does them. He lets them be assailed by these spirits of temptation, to bring them to the knowledge of themselves, and their being in need of help, they may draw near to Him.

Therefore they ungratefully complain of that for which they should thank His infinite Goodness.

What thou shouldest do in such cases is, sink thyself in the consideration of thy perverse inclination, which, for thy good, God would have thee know, is ready for every grievous sin; and that without His help thou wouldest rush into utter perdition.

And from this gather hope and confidence that He is ready to help thee, since He shows thee the danger, and wills to draw thee near to Himself by prayer, and by recourse unto Him; for this, then, thou shouldest give Him most humble thanks.

And be assured, that such spirits of temptation and evil thoughts are better driven away by a patient endurance of the pain, and dexterous flight, than by a too anxious resistance.

Examination of Conscience.

CHAPTER LVII.

OF THE EXAMINATION OF CONSCIENCE.

FOR the examination of conscience consider three things.

The falls of the day ;

Their cause, and,

The spirit and boldness which thou hast in resisting them, and in acquiring the opposite virtues.

With regard to the falls, thou wilt do as I have told thee in the chapter on "when we are wounded."

The cause of these falls thou must strive to subdue and strike to the ground.

The will to do this, and to acquire virtues, thou wilt strengthen by distrust of self and trust in God, by prayer, and by a number of acts full of hatred for the sin, and of desire for the opposite virtue.

Distrust the victories thou hast gained and the good works thou hast done.

Moreover, I do not advise thee to think much of them, because of the almost inevitable danger of at least some hidden motive of vain-glory and pride.

Perseverance until Death.

Therefore, whatever they be, leave them all behind to the mercy of God, and think how much more yet remains for you to do.

As to thanksgiving for the gifts and favours which the Lord has bestowed on thee in the course of the day, acknowledge Him as the Doer of all good, and thank Him for having rescued thee from so many open enemies, and still more from the hidden ones, for having given thee good thoughts and occasions of virtues, and for every other blessing which thou knowest not.



CHAPTER LVIII.

HOW WE MUST NEEDS PERSEVERE IN THIS STRUGGLE, EVEN UNTO DEATH.

AMONG the other things needful in this combat, one is the perseverance with which we must strive continually to mortify our passions, which in this life never die, but, on the contrary, like evil weeds, shoot up each hour.

And this is a battle, from which, as it ends only with life, there is no escape; and he who fights not in it, is of necessity either taken captive or slain.

Perseverance until Death.

, we have to deal with enemies who
unceasing hatred, so that from them
ver hope either for peace or a truce,
ey slay those most cruelly who strive
ake friends of them.

ast no cause, however, to fear either
er or their number ; for in this battle
be a loser but he who wills it ; the
ength of our enemies is in the Hand
ptain for Whose honour we have to

ot only will He guard thee from all
but He will even fight for thee,
g mightier than all thine enemies,
give the victory into thy hands, if
i wilt fight manfully together with
I trust not in thyself, but in His
d Goodness.

the Lord give thee not so speedy a
e not disheartened, but be the more
and this will also help thee to fight
) that all things which shall befall
se even which to thee may seem
from, yea, most opposed to thy
of what kind soever they be,) all will
to thy good and profit, if thou wilt
thyself as a faithful and generous

u then, beloved, follow thy Heavenly

Preparation for the Last Conflict.

Captain, Who for thee hath overcome the world, and given death to Himself; apply thyself with a courageous heart to this battle and to the utter destruction of all thine enemies; for if thou leave but one of them alive, he will be as a beam in thine eye, and as a thorn in thy side, to hinder thee in the course of glorious victory.



CHAPTER LIX.

HOW TO PREPARE OURSELVES AGAINST THE ENEMIES WHO ASSAIL US IN THE HOUR OF DEATH.

THOUGH our whole life be a continual warfare on earth, yet the chief and most memorable struggle is at the last hour of the great passage; for he who falls then rises more.

That thou mayest be well prepared thou must fight manfully now in this present time which is given thee; for he who fights well in life, will, by the good habit already acquired, gain an easy victory in the hour of death.

Besides this, think often, and with fir-

Preparation for the Last Conflict.

ention, on death ; for when it comes upon
ee, thou wilt fear it less, and thy mind will
e more free and ready for the battle.

Worldly men fly from this thought, lest it
rouble their delight in earthly things, on
which they have willingly so set their affections,
that the thought of having to quit them gives
them pain. Thus their unruly affection, instead
of getting weaker, goes on increasing more
and more in strength ; so that the separation
from this life, and from things so dear to them,
is unspeakably distressing, and often most so
to those who have enjoyed them longest.

The better to help thee in making this
important preparation, fancy thyself sometimes
alone and utterly helpless in the agonies of
death, and bring before thy mind the following
things, which are likely to trouble thee at that
moment ; then think over the remedies I shall
give thee, that thou mayest make the better
use of them in that last strait ; for the blow
which can be struck but once, should be well
practised beforehand, lest we commit an error
which can never be remedied.



CHAPTER LX.

OF FOUR ASSAULTS OF OUR ENEMIES IN THE HOUR OF DEATH; AND FIRST, OF THE ASSAULT UPON FAITH, AND THE MANNER OF DEFENDING OURSELVES.

THE principal and most dangerous assault which our enemies are wont to direct against us in the hour of death, are four in number; viz., temptation of faith, despite, vain-glory, and various illusions of devils transforming themselves into angels of light.

As to the first assault; if the enemy begin to tempt thee with his false arguments, withdraw instantly from the understanding to which he will, saying, "Get thee behind me, Satan, father of lies, for I will not even hear thee enough for me to believe as the Holy Catholic Church believes."

And, as far as possible, shut out all speculations concerning the faith, how fair soever they may seem, looking upon them as suggestions of the devil to stir up strife.

But if not in time to withdraw thy mind resolutely, be very strong and steadfast that thou yield not to any reason or authority from

Assault on our Faith.

Scripture which the adversary may bring forward ; for all will be garbled, or misapplied, or misinterpreted, though to thee it may seem good, clear, and evident.

And if the wily serpent ask thee what the Catholic Church believes, make him no answer, but perceiving his deceit, and that he would at least entrap thee in thy words, make an inward act of more lively faith ; or else, in order to make him beside himself with rage, answer, that the Holy Catholic Church believes the truth ; and if the evil one ask in return, "What is truth?" do thou answer : "Even that which she believes."

Above all, ever keep thy heart fixed on the Crucified, saying : "My God, my Creator, and my Saviour, help me speedily, and go not from me, that I depart not from the truth of Thy holy Catholic faith ; and grant, that as by Thy grace I was born in this faith, so in it, to Thy glory, I may end this mortal life."



Of the Assault of Despair.

CHAPTER LXI.

OF THE ASSAULT OF DESPAIR, AND ITS
REMEDY.

THE second assault by which the perverse demon attempts our utter overthrow, is the terror with which he fills us at the remembrance of our sins, in order to make us rush headlong into the pit of despair.

In this danger, keep to this certain rule, that the thoughts of thy sins are the result of grace, and for thy soul's health, when they bring forth humility, grief for having offended God, and trust in His Mercy. But when they disquiet thee, and make thee distrustful and faint-hearted, though they seem to thee true and sufficient to persuade thee that thou art condemned, and thy day of salvation past, be sure that they come from the deceiver ; humble thyself the more, and trust the more in God ; so shalt thou conquer the enemy with his own weapons, and glorify the Lord.

Mourn indeed over thine offence against God, every time it comes to thy memory ; but, nevertheless, seek pardon for it, trusting in His Passion.

Of the Assault of Vain-Glory.

And I tell thee moreover, that, though God Himself should seem to say to thee, thou art not of His sheep, still on no account must thou let go thy trust in Him, but say to Him humbly: "Thou hast indeed reason, O my Lord, to cast me away in my sins, but I have greater reason to hope that in Thy Mercy Thou wilt pardon me. Save therefore, I beseech Thee, this Thy miserable creature, condemned indeed by her own sinfulness, but redeemed with the price of Thy Blood. I commit myself wholly into Thy Hands, O my Redeemer, that Thou mayest save me to Thy glory, trusting in Thy boundless Mercy. Do with me whatsoever pleaseth Thee, for Thou art my only Lord; yea, if Thou slay me, yet will I trust in Thee."



CHAPTER LXII.

OF THE ASSAULT OF VAIN-GLORY.

THE third assault is that of vain-glory and presumption. Here thou must not suffer thyself, in any possible way, to be led into the very least complacency in thyself or in thy

Of the Assault of Vain-Glory

works. Let thy delight be in the Lord in His Mercy, and in the works of Love and Passion.

Abase thyself yet more in thine own eyes even to thy last breath, and acknowledge alone to be the Author of every good done by thee, which may come to thee. Fly to Him for help, yet expect it not on thy merits, however many and great victories thou hast gained. Ever stand in holy fear, confessing sincerely that thy labours would be vain, if thy God gather thee under the shadow of His Wings in Whose protection alone thou wilt trust.

If thou follow this advice, thou shalt not be able to prevail against thee, so thou wilt open to thyself the way which leads to the Kingdom of Heaven which is Jerusalem.



CHAPTER LXIII.

OF THE ASSAULT OF ILLUSIONS AND FALSE APPEARANCES IN THE HOUR OF DEATH.

IF our obstinate foe, who is never weary of troubling us, assail thee by false appearances, transforming himself into an angel of light, nevertheless, stand firm and stedfast in the acknowledgment of thy nothingness, and say boldly to him: "Return, wretched one, into thy darkness; for I am unworthy of visions, nor do I need any thing but the Mercy of my JESUS."

And even though the visions seem to thee to bear almost convincing signs that they come from Heaven, still refuse them, and drive them as far from thee as thou canst. Fear not lest this resistance, founded on thine unworthiness, be displeasing to the Lord; for if the matter be from Him, He knows well how to make it clear, and thou wilt be no loser; seeing that He who giveth grace to the humble, doth not withdraw it because of acts which spring from humility.

These are the most common weapons which the enemy is wont to use against us in our



to the particular inclination
knows him to be most :
before the hour of the g
near, we should arm our
fight valiantly against our n
and those which have the g
that the victory may be
which snatches from us
preparation or for fighting.



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OF INWARD PEACE;

OR,

The Path to Paradise.





Of Inward Peace.

CHAPTER I.

WHAT IS THE NATURE OF OUR HEART, A
HOW IT OUGHT TO BE GOVERNED.

THY heart was created by God for this
alone, to be loved and possessed by H
With this love thou canst make it do what t
wilt. Every thing, however difficult, will t
be very easy to thee. The first thing then
to fix and strengthen the intention of thy he
so that what is outward may spring from w
is inward. For although bodily penan
and all exercises by which the flesh is chasti
and afflicted, are praiseworthy, when modera
by discretion, according to the circumstar
of those who use them, yet by such me
alone thou wilt never acquire a single virt
but only vanity and the wind of vain-glo
and all thy labour will be lost unless th

The life of man is nothing casual warfare and temptation. Because warfare, thou must watch always, guard upon thy heart, so that it be full and quiet. And if any movement disquietude arise within thy soul, be careful to calm it instantly, stilling and not letting it wander or turn any of these things. Do this when any thing disquiets thee, whether in any other time ; and know that thou art able to pray aright when thou art thus ; but remember, that all is gentleness and without effort. The chief and constant exercise of thee be to quiet thy heart, and never let



Of a Peaceful Spirit.

toil, nay, with great calmness and security. With this sentinel, sent thee by God, thou wilt so watch over thyself, as to be able to pray, obey, humble thyself, and endure injuries without disquiet. True it is, that before thou canst gain this peace, thou wilt at first take great pains from want of practice. But afterwards thy soul will remain greatly comforted by any contradiction which may befall it; and from day to day thou wilt better gain this power of quieting thy spirit. And if, at times, thou find thyself so troubled and disturbed, as to seem unable to give thyself peace, turn instantly to prayer, and persevere in it, in imitation of Christ our Lord, Who prayed three times in the garden, to give thee an example that thy only resource and refuge must be prayer, and that however saddened and faint-hearted thou feel thyself, thou must not part from it, till thou find thy will conformed to the Will of God, and therefore devout and peaceful, and, moreover, wholly inspirited and emboldened to receive and embrace, what at first it feared and abhorred going thus to greet it; "Arise, let us be going; Behold! he is at hand which doth betray Me."



CHAPTER III.

HOW THIS PEACEFUL HABITATION IS TO BE
GRADUALLY BUILT UP.

TAKE care (as I have before said) never to let thy heart be troubled, nor meddle with things which may disquiet it, but ever strive to keep it calm. For in this way, the Lord will build up in thy soul a city of peace, and thy heart will be a house of pleasures and delights. This only does He require of thee ; that whenever thou art ruffled, thou shouldest set about calming and quieting thyself anew, in all thy works and thoughts. For as a city is not built in a day, neither must thou expect in a day to acquire this inward peace ; because this is nothing less than building a house unto the Lord, and a tabernacle to the Most High, making thyself His temple ; and the same Lord is He Who must build it, for otherwise thy labour would be in vain. Remember also, that the whole foundation and main support of this exercise must be humility.



Built up Slowly.

CHAPTER IV.

HOW THE SOUL MUST REFUSE ALL CONSOLATION ; FOR THIS IS TRUE HUMILITY AND POVERTY OF SPIRIT BY WHICH WE GAIN THIS PEACE OF THE SOUL.

WOULDEST thou enter by this gate of humility (for other entrance there is none), thou must toil and strive, especially in the beginning, to embrace tribulations and contradictions as dear sisters, desiring to be despised by all, and to have no one to favour thee, nor to comfort thee, save thy God. Fix firmly and stedfastly in thy heart, that God alone is thy Good and thine only Refuge, and that all other things are thorns unto thee. Woe unto thee if thou press them to thy heart ! And if some affront be offered thee, thou shouldest be very glad thereof, bearing it joyfully, and holding for certain, that then God is with thee. Neither shouldest thou desire, nor ever seek any other honour, but to suffer for love of Him, and whatever is to His greater glory. Strive to rejoice when others use towards thee words of injury, or rebuke, or *despise thee*. For a rich treasure lies hid

Of Interior Peace.

beneath this dust, and if thou take it thou wilt soon find thyself rich, although thou have bestowed this gift on the world and done it unconsciously. Never seek to be loved or esteemed by anyone in this life; rather thou mayest be left to suffer with Christ and that no one may hinder thee. Be on guard against thyself, as against thy greatest enemy. Follow not thine own will, but the will of God and His judgment, thine own opinion, if thou wilt not destroy thyself. To this end thou shalt have weapons to defend thee from all enemies and whenever thy will would incline to any thing, even if it be holy, lay it first to the sword and naked, with deep humility beseech the Lord, beseeching Him, that not thy will but His be done therein. Do this, with a heart wholly mortified, without any mixture of self-love, knowing that of thyself thou hast nothing and canst do nothing. Beware of thy own opinions, which bear with them an appearance of holiness and indiscreet zeal, of which the Lord says: "Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves; by their fruits ye shall know them." Their fruits are, within the soul anxiety and disquietude, things which lead thee away from God and from this inward peace and

Of Interior Peace.

under whatsoever colour and appearance, are false prophets, which in sheep's clothing, that is, under colour of zeal, and of helping thy neighbour indiscreetly, are ravening wolves, which prey upon thy humility, and upon that peace and quietness so needful for all who wish to derive certain profit. And the greater the appearance of holiness in anything, the more narrowly must it be examined into; and this (as I have said), with much repose and inward quiet. And if, at times, thou shalt fail in some one of these, be not disturbed, but humble thyself before thy Lord, acknowledge thy weakness, and learn for the future. It may be, God permits it, in order to humble some pride which is hid within thee, and thou knowest it not. If, sometimes, thou feel thy spirit wounded by some sharp and poisonous thorn, be not troubled because of this; but watch the more carefully, lest it go further, and penetrate more deeply. Withdraw thy heart, and gently move thy will into its abode of peace and quietness; keep thy soul purely to God, Whom thou wilt ever find within thee and in the depth of thy heart, through the uprightness of thine intention. Be well assured that every thing happens in order to prove thee; that so He may fit thee to receive thy good things, and that thou mayest obtain

Of Inward Solitude.

the crown of righteousness laid up for thee by His infinite mercy.



CHAPTER V.

HOW THE SOUL MUST BE KEPT IN SOLITUDE,
THAT GOD MAY WORK WITHIN HER.

REGARD therefore thine own soul very highly, because the Father of fathers, and Lord of lords, has created it for His dwelling-place and temple. Value it so as never to let it lower itself, nor incline to any other object. Let thy desires and thy hopes be ever for the coming of the Lord, Who will not visit thy soul if He finds it not alone. Think not, that in the presence of others He will vouchsafe her a single word, save to reproach and fly from her. He wills that she should be in loneliness, as much as may be, without thoughts, wholly without desires, and still more without self-will. Yet must thou not indiscreetly impose penances on thyself, nor seek opportunities of suffering for love of God, with no guide save thine own will ; but with the advice of thy spiritual adviser and of thy superiors, who will rule thee in the place of God, that He, through them, may dispose

Of Inward Solitude.

thy will, and do with it what He wills, and as He wills. Thou shalt not do what thou wouldest, but let God do in thee what He wills. Let thy will be always so loosed from self, that thou hast no desire of thine own; and if thou hast a desire about anything, will it so, that if what thou willest be not done, but the contrary, it may not grieve thee, but let thy spirit remain as calm as if thou hadst desired nothing. This is the true freedom of the spirit, not to bind itself to any thing whatsoever. If thou wilt give thy soul to God thus loose, free, and alone, thou shalt see the wonders He will work in her. O admirable solitude, secret chamber of the Most High, where only He will give audience, and not elsewhere, and there speak to the heart of the soul! O desert, thus changed into Paradise, since in it only does God vouchsafe to be seen and spoken with! "I will turn aside, and see this great sight."

But if thou wouldest arrive here, enter bare-foot upon this ground; for it is holy. First, put off thy shoes from thy feet, that is, the affections of thy soul, and leave them bare and free: carry neither purse nor scrip upon this road; for thou art to desire no one thing of this world, though it be sought by others: neither salute any man; but fix thy whole

Of Love for our Neighbour.

thoughts and affections on God alone, and not in creatures ; leave the dead to bury their dead ; go thou alone to the land of the living, and let death have no part in thee.



CHAPTER VI.

OF THE PRUDENCE TO BE USED IN THE LOVE OF OUR NEIGHBOUR, THAT IT DISTURB NOT THIS PEACE.

EXPERIENCE itself will teach thee, if thou try it, that this path of charity and love towards God and our neighbour is very plain and open, whereby to go to life eternal. The Lord said that He "came to send fire upon the earth," and that He willed only "that it be kindled." But though the love of God has no limit, the love of our neighbour should have ; for, if it be not duly moderated, it might do thee much harm, and lead thee, through gaining others, to lose and ruin thyself.

Thou shouldest so love thy neighbour as not to hurt thine own soul. Though thou art bound to give a good example, yet thou must never do any thing solely for this end ; else it would be but loss to thee. Do all things

Of Love for our Neighbour.

simply and holily, without regard to any thing but to please God alone. Humble thyself in all thy works, and thou wilt know how little thou canst, through their example, be a help to others. Consider that thou art not to be fervent and zealous for souls, so as to lose thine own quiet and peace. Have a burning thirst and desire that all men may know the truth which thou dost know and understand, and be inebriated with this wine which God promises and gives to each one without price.

This thirst for the salvation of thy neighbour thou mayest have at all times; but it must spring from thy love to God, and not from thine indiscreet zeal—God Who must plant it in the loneliness of thy soul, and must gather the fruit thereof when He pleases. Sow nothing of thyself alone, but offer unto God the ground of thy heart, pure, cleared of every thing; for then He will sow His own seed in it, as He wills, and so shall it bring forth fruit. Always remember that God wills this thy soul to be alone, and thoroughly loosed from all things, that He may unite it to Himself. Let Him alone choose thee. Hinder Him not by thy free will. Sit still without a thought of thyself, save that of pleasing God, waiting to be led to thy work; for the master of the house is already gone out, and is seeking labourers.

Of Love for our Neighbour.

Cast off all thought and care, strip thyself of all anxiety about thyself, and of all affection for earthly things, that God may clothe thee with Himself, and give thee that which thou hast not been able to conceive. Wholly forget thyself as much as may be, and let the love of God alone live in thy soul. Of all that has been said, keep this in mind, that with all diligence (or rather, without anxious diligence) thou must calm thy zeal and fervour with great discretion, that so with all peace and quietness thou mayest keep God within thee, and that thy soul lose not its own capital, which it needs, by indiscreetly putting it out to interest for others. Silence, such as has been here described, is a loud cry in the ear of God. Idleness such as this manages every thing, and with such alone must thou trade, in order to be rich towards God. For this is nothing else than to resign thy soul to God, emptied of every thing. Yet thou must do this, without claiming any thing as thine own, or thinking thou art doing any thing. For God does all, and from thee the Lord wills only, that thou humble thyself before Him, and offer Him a heart wholly free and emptied of earthly things, with an inward desire that His divine will may, in all and through all, be perfectly fulfilled in thee.

Of Coming before God.

CHAPTER VII.

HOW THE SOUL, STRIPPED OF HER OWN WILL, MUST PRESENT HERSELF BEFORE GOD.

THOU must begin then in this way, gently and gradually, trusting in that same Lord Who calls thee, saying: "Come unto Me, all ye that travail and are heavy laden, and I will refresh you." "All ye that are athirst come to the Fountain." This movement and heavenly calling thou must follow, awaiting with it the impulse of the Holy Spirit, to throw thyself resolutely and blindly into the ocean of this Divine Providence, and of the Eternal Good-pleasure, praying that It may be done in thee, and that thus thou mayest be irresistibly borne onward by the mighty waves of the Divine Will, and be carried to the haven of thine own perfection and salvation. Having made this act, which thou shouldest repeat a hundred thousand times a day, labour and strive with all possible confidence, both inward and outward, to draw nigh with all the powers of thy soul, to the things which stir thee up, to praise, love, and long for God.

Of Coming before God.

works, binding the spirit and dragging it after one thing or another, in this way insisting that God should lead it by the path we wish, and forcing it to walk along the road of our own imagining ; unconsciously caring more to do our own will in this case than the Will of our Lord, which perversity is nothing less than seeking God by flying from Him, and wishing to please God without doing His Will. If thou desire really to advance in this path, and to reach the desired end, have no other purpose, no other wish, but to find God ; and wheresoever He wills to manifest Himself to thee, there leave all else and go no farther, till thou have leave ; forget all other things, and rest thee in thy Lord. When it shall please His Divine Majesty to withdraw and cease to manifest Himself in this way, then thou mayest again seek Him, continuing thy exercises ; still with the same purpose and desire to find, through them, thy Beloved ; and having found Him, do as we said before ; leave every thing, knowing that His Will is then fulfilled. This should be well considered, because many spiritual persons lose much peace and profit by wearying themselves with their exercises, fancying they do nothing unless they finish them all, looking upon this as perfection, making themselves masters of

Of Offering Ourselves.

their own will, to this end living a life of toil, as one who labours at a task, without ever arriving at that true rest and inward peace where the Lord truly abides and rests.



CHAPTER VIII.

OF THE FAITH WE SHOULD HAVE IN THE MOST HOLY SACRAMENT OF THE ALTAR ; AND HOW WE SHOULD OFFER OURSELVES UNTO THE LORD.

STRIVE daily to increase and strengthen more and more in thy soul faith in the most Holy Sacrament, and cease not to wonder at so incomprehensible a Mystery, and to rejoice therein, considering how God manifests Himself under these pure and humble elements, to make thee more worthy ; for "Blessed are they who see not and believe." Desire not that in this life He should manifest Himself to thee under any other form. Strive to inflame thy will in Him, and to be each day more ready to do always His Will in all things. When thou dost offer thyself to God in this Sacrament, thou must be willing and prepared to suffer, for love of Him, all torments, pains,

which are beyond you.

What thou canst always do i will to God, and desire no long thing of thyself. For as soon this freedom and art loosed on thou mayest be always and every busy or unoccupied,) thou wilt er peace. In this freedom of spiri great good thou art seeking. T nought else but perseverance o man within himself, not stretchin to will, or desire, or seek anythin self; and so long as thou shalt al thou wilt enjoy that divine servi the great kingdom within us.



CHAPTER X.

Of not being Discouraged.

Give thee much annoyance on thy road. God allows this for thy greater good. Remember that this is the war in which the saints have carried away crowns of great merit. In all things that disturb thee thou shalt say, "Lord, behold Thy servant; let Thy Will be done in me. I know and confess that the truth of Thy word shall stand sure for ever. Thy promises never fail, and in them do I trust. Behold Thy creature; do with me what Thou wilt. My God, I have nothing to hold me back. I am Thine alone." Happy the soul which thus offers itself to its Lord, whenever it is disturbed and unquiet. And if this conflict last long, and thou canst not, as quickly as thou wouldest, conform thy will to the Will of God, be not disheartened nor dismayed: continue in prayer and self-oblation, for thou shalt gain the victory.

Consider Christ's conflict in the garden, and how His Humanity shrank from it, saying, "Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from Me." But forthwith He placed His Soul in loneliness, and with a Will loosed and free, said with deep humility, "Nevertheless, not My Will, but Thine be done." "Behold and do after this Pattern." When thou findest thyself in any difficulty, stir not one step until thou have raised thine eyes to Christ on the Cross; for there thou wilt see written and en-

Be not dismayed, if thou art sorrowful by thy self-love; withdraw from the Cross, but return to prayer, and in humility till thou lose thine own will that God's Will alone be done. If thou dost go away from prayer, having from it this fruit only, be content; hast not attained to this, thy soul is dead and without its food. Strive to let God dwell in thy soul, not even for a moment but GOD only. Have neither anger nor jealousy towards any thing whatsoever; be not vexed at the wickedness and bad example of others, but be as a little child, who is not aware of all such bitterness, and passes by without offence.



CHAPTER XI

Of the Devices of Satan.

and make them attribute something to themselves, and to their own diligence and industry, not considering the gift of grace, without which no man can name the Name of Jesus.

And though of ourselves and with our own free will we may resist this grace, yet without it we have no power to receive it. So that if any man receive it not, the fault is in himself; but if he does receive it, it is through this same grace which is sufficiently offered to all. Our adversary strives then to make a man think and believe that it is of himself that he is more diligent than others, and better disposed to receive the gifts of God; and to make him do this with pride, not considering how insufficient he is of himself without help; that through this he may be led on to despise others in his heart, who do not the same good works that he does. Therefore, if thou art not very watchful, and dost not instantly and with all speed confound, humble, and abase, and make thyself a nothing (as has been said), he will make thee fall into pride, like the Pharisee mentioned in the Gospel, who boasted of his own good works, and judged the evil deeds of others. And if in this way he should ever take possession of thy will, he would make himself its master, filling it with all manner of wickedness; and great would be the hurt and danger.

Of the Wiles of Satan.

Therefore hath the Lord warned us to watch and pray. It is needful, then, that thou beware with all diligence, lest the enemy rob thee of so great a treasure as peace and quiet of soul. For he strives with all his might to take from thee this rest, and to make thy soul live in anxiety and disquiet, knowing that herein consists the whole loss and hurt. For if a soul is at rest, it does every thing with ease, it does enough, and does all well. Hence it perseveres willingly, and easily resists every hindrance. On the contrary, if it is disturbed and unquiet, it does little, and that very imperfectly, is soon weary, in short, lives in a fruitless martyrdom. Wouldest thou then come off victorious, and that the enemy spoil not thy work, there is no one point on which thou must be more watchful than not to let disquiet enter into thy soul, nor allow any temptation to disquietude even for a moment. The better to know how to guard against the wiles of the enemy, take it in this case for a certain rule, that every thought which discourages and removes thee from growing in love and trust towards GOD, is a messenger of hell; and as such, thou must drive him away, and neither admit him, nor give him a hearing. For the office of the Holy Spirit is none other than always and on all occasions to unite souls more

Of the Debites of Satan.

closely to God, kindling and inflaming them in His sweet love, and giving them fresh trust; whilst that of the devil is always the contrary, using to this end all the means in his power, such as causing excessive fear, making the most of ordinary weakness, suggesting that the soul does not prepare herself as she ought; neither for confession, nor Communion, nor prayer, and so filling her always with distrust, fear, and disquiet. The want of sensible devotion, and of a sweetness in prayer and in other exercises, he makes an occasion of impatient sadness, giving the soul to understand that in this way all is lost, and that it were better to leave off so many exercises; and he brings her at last into such great disquiet and distrust as to make her think that, do what she will, all is vain and fruitless. Hence her grief and fear go on increasing, till she thinks herself forgotten by God. But such is not the truth. For numberless are the blessings which would spring from dryness of spirit and want of sensible devotion, as often as the soul understood what God by these means would do for her, if only on her part there be patience and perseverance in well-doing to the best of her power. And that thou mayest understand this the better, and that the blessing and benefit which God would give thee may not (from thy want of

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CHAPTER XII.

THAT THE SOUL MUST NOT DISC
BECAUSE OF INWARD TEMP

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Of Inward Peace.

which may offend Him. This seldom happens in the beginning of their conversion, but after they have served the Lord for some time, and when they are resolved to will to serve Him more perfectly, and have already put their hand to the work. We never see that sinners, or persons given up to worldly things, complain of such temptations. Whence it plainly appears that this is a precious food with which God feeds those whom He loves. And though it be insipid to our taste, it nevertheless helps us wonderfully, though at the time we perceive it not. For the soul, finding herself in such dryness, and, moreover, often enduring such temptations as shock her even to think of, by this means gains that fear and detestation of herself, and that humility which God requires, although, as has been said, the soul, not understanding at the time this secret, detests it, and shrinks from walking in such a path, like one who would never remain without sweetness and delight, and who, without them, thinks all other exercises but lost time and fruitless labour.



Of Temptations.

of Christian : nor would he ever have come to such a low opinion of himself, nor to such deep humility, had not great tribulations and these extraordinary temptations forced him to it. For one favour which God in this life bestows upon the soul that has wholly placed and resigned herself into His Hands, is to medicine her as He pleases, and with such treatment as He alone perfectly knows to be necessary to her health and well-being. Besides this fruit, which our souls reap from such-like temptations and want of devotion, there are many others. For he who is thus afflicted, is almost forced to have recourse to God, and to try to do good works, as a remedy for his distress ; and in like manner, in order to be freed at last from such suffering, he sets about examining his heart, avoiding all sin, and every thing which seems to be imperfect, or which may, in any way, remove him further from God. And so this tribulation, which he took to be so adverse and hurtful, serves afterwards as a scourge to drive him to seek God with greater fervour, and to avoid every thing which he thinks contrary to the Divine Will. Lastly, all these tribulations, and all the weariness and labour which the soul endures under these temptations and withdrawals of spiritual delight, are but a loving purgatory, if (as has

Of Temptations.

been already said) they be born with patience and humility, and they serve to win for us that crown in heaven which by their means only we can obtain, a crown the more glorious, the greater the labour and weariness by which it has been gained. Hence we see how little reason there is for this discontent and alarm which persons of little experience entertain, who attribute to the devil, or to their own sins and imperfections, that which comes to them from the Hand of God. They mistake tokens of love for marks of hatred; they think that Divine favours and caresses are blows which come from an angered heart, and believe all they do to be lost and worthless, and this loss to be without remedy. Whereas did they really believe what is the fact; namely, that there is no loss, but great gain, (provided the soul, as she always can, uses that opportunity,) and that all is a proof of God's loving remembrance of us; it would not be possible for them to be disquieted, or lose their peace, because they saw themselves afflicted by many temptations and imaginations, and found themselves dry and indevout in prayer and in other exercises. On the contrary, they would then, with fresh perseverance, humble their souls in the Sight of the Lord, purposing, in all and through all, to fulfil the Divine Will in whatever way

Of Temptations.

the Lord wills to make use of them in this world ; using diligence to keep themselves in peace and quiet, taking every thing from their Heavenly Father's Hand, in Which alone is the cup that is given them to drink. For whether the trouble and temptation be from the devil or from men, or because of sins, or in whatsoever way, still it is God who gives it thee ; though He offers it thee in various ways, as it pleases Him. For it is only the evil of the pain which reaches thee, and this is always from Him Who orders it for thy good. Though the evil of the fault committed (by thy neighbour, for instance, in hurting or insulting thee), is contrary to His Will, yet so far as thou art concerned, He makes use of it for good and for thy health. Therefore instead of giving way to sadness and discontent, thou shouldest thank Him with inward joy and gladness, doing all thou canst with perseverance and resolution, not losing time, and with it, the many and great rewards God wills thee to gain through this opportunity which He offers thee,



Of Fallings and Infirmities.

CHAPTER XIV.

OF THE REMEDY WE OUGHT TO USE AGAINST
DISQUIETUDE UNDER FAULTS AND INFIR-
MITIES.

IF at times thou shalt fall into some sin or negligence in word or deed, such as disquieting thyself at any thing which befalls thee, or murmuring, or listening to murmurs, or falling into contention, or movements of impatience, or curiosity, or suspicion of others, or into any other fault, whether once or many times ; thou must not be disturbed nor be disheartened and grieved at the thought of what has happened, nor be confounded within thyself ; at one time believing that thou wilt never be free from such weaknesses ; at another, that thine imperfections and weaknesses of purpose are the cause of them ; or again representing to thyself that thou art not really walking in the spirit and in the way of the Lord ; and through a thousand other fears, burdening thy soul at every step with discontent and cowardice. Hence it follows, that thou art ashamed to appear before God, or thou dost it distrustfully, as though thou hadst broken the faith

Of Fallings and Infirmities.

thou owest Him ; and, as a remedy, thou lovest time in thinking of these things, scrutinizing how far thou didst it with set purpose, and whether thou didst consent to it ; whether thou didst it willingly or no, or didst at once put it away. And because thou hast not taken the right road, the more thou dost think of it, the less thou art able to make up thy mind, and the more does thy perplexity and trouble increase, and thy anxiety to confess thyself. Thou dost go to confession with a wearisome fear ; and after having lost much time in making thy confession, thy spirit is but the more disquieted, from the thought of not having told all ; thus thou leadest a most bitter and uneasy life, with little fruit, and losing great part of the merit of it. All this arises from not understanding thy natural weakness, and not knowing the way in which the soul should treat with God. For after having fallen into all the above-named frailties, or into any other, she may more easily treat with Him by a humble and loving conversion, than by the grief and discontent she feels for the fault, dwelling only upon the examination, especially of venial and ordinary sins, of which I am speaking. For into such only is a soul wont to fall, which is living in the manner here supposed : and I have spoken

Of Fallings and Infirmities.

only for those who are leading a spiritual life, and who are striving to advance, and are free from mortal sins. For those who live carelessly and in mortal sin, continually offending God, there needs another kind of exhortation; this medicine is not for them. Such have reason to be troubled and to weep, and to give much thought to self-examination and confession, lest through their own fault and negligence, they render unavailing the remedy necessary for their salvation. To return, then, to the peace and quiet in which the servant of God should ever abide I will say further, that this conversion, in order to be full of trust in God, must be understood to refer, not only to light and daily faults, but also to such as are greater and more grave than usual, if at any time the Lord should suffer thee to fall into them; even though they be many together, and spring not from weakness and frailty only, but from deliberation. For the contrition which fills the troubled spirit with scruples only, will never lead the soul to perfection, unless it be joined to a loving confidence in the Goodness and Mercy of God. This is more especially necessary for persons who not only seek to rise out of their miseries, but would also gain a high degree of holiness, and great love and union with God. Many spiritual persons from



Of Fallings and Infirmities.

not being willing to understand this rightly, bear about with them a broken and distrustful heart and spirit, which hinders them from going onward, and fitting themselves for the higher graces which, one after another, God has in store for them. And they often lead a very miserable, useless, and pitiable life, because they will follow only their own imagination, and do not embrace the true and wholesome doctrine which leads by the royal road to the high and solid virtues of the Christian life, and to that peace which Christ Himself left us upon earth. Such persons, whenever they find themselves in any disquiet through doubts of conscience, should seek the advice of their spiritual adviser, or of any other person whom they think capable of giving them the best advice, commit themselves to him, and wholly at rest. We will finish in the following chapter what we have to say of the uneasiness arising from shortcomings.

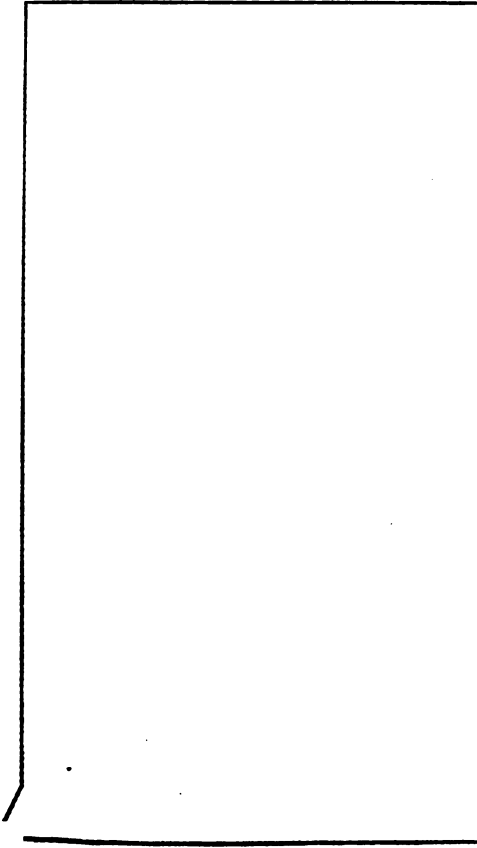


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CHAPTER XV.

HOW THE SOUL, WITHOUT LOSING TIME,
CAN RECOVER CALMNESS, AND MAKE
PROGRESS.

WHENEVER thou shalt have fallen into any fault, be it great or small, though thou have committed the same four thousand times a day, and always willingly and knowingly, observe this rule. Disturb not thyself with morose bitterness, disquiet not thyself, lose no time in scrutinizing; but instantly acknowledging what thou hast done, and considering thine own frailty with humility, turn thyself lovingly to thy God, and with the lips, or at least with the mind, say to Him, "Lord, I have done this, being such an one as I am, and nothing else could be expected from me, but these and other faults; nor should I even stop here, but for Thy Goodness, which doth raise me up and doth not forsake me. I thank Thee for that from which Thou hast delivered me, and I grieve over that which I have done, not answering to Thy grace. Forgive me, give me grace never more to offend Thee, and may



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